



SOMETIME

(AND)
OTHER POEMS





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SOMETIMES AND OTHER POEMS

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AND OTHER POEMS

BY
MAY RILEY SMITH



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*To him whose praises make my heart more vain
Than any recompense my life can know,
Whose patient bands, through every doubt and pain,
Make easy places where my feet may go; -
And to the child, whose life has been to me
The sweetest flower my bosom ever wore,
Whose little elbow leans upon my knee, -
The lightest burden mother ever bore! -
To these, the sharers of my household throne,
Whose names within my prayers together stand,
I dedicate what always is their own, -
The pleasant labor of my unskilled hand.*

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SOMETIMES.

OMETIME, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash before us out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue ;
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.

And we shall see how, while we frown
and sigh,

God's plans go on as best for you
and me,—

How, when we called, he needed not
our cry,

Because his wisdom to the end could
see.

And even as wise parents disallow
Too much of sweet to craving baby-
hood,—

So God, perhaps, is keeping from us
now

Life's sweetest things, because it seem-
eth good.

And if sometimes, commingled with
life's wine,

We find the wormwood, and rebel and
shrink,

Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine
Pours out this potion for our lips to
drink.

And if some friend you love is lying
low,

Where human kisses cannot reach his
face,

Oh, do not blame the loving Father so,
But wear your sorrow with obedient
grace !

And you shall shortly know that length-
ened breath

Is not the sweetest gift God sends his
friend;

And that sometimes the sable pall of
death

Conceals the fairest boon his love
can send.

If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within and all God's work-
ings see,

We could interpret all this doubt and
strife,

And for each mystery could find a
key !

But not to-day. Then be content, poor
 \ heart !

God's plans, like lilies pure and white,
 unfold ;

We must not tear the close-shut leaves
 apart, —

Time will reveal the chalices of gold.
And if, through patient toil, we reach
 the land

Where tired feet, with sandals loosed,
 may rest,

When we shall clearly see and under-
 stand,

I think that we will say, “God knew
 the best ! ”

“YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.”



REMBLING she stood at the
heavenly door,—

The world around her was
strange and new;

She had come through the dark from
the earthly shore,

And how should a pilgrim know what
to do,—

Whether to knock, or whether to wait,
When she finds herself at the shining
Gate?

“Thou hast crossed the Valley,” an
angel said,

Touching the pilgrim’s dampened
hair,—

"The lonely valley which travellers
dread,
As hither they wend from the land
of Care.

Wouldst thou greet the King? Dost
wear his sign?

Hast thou steadfast held to thy faith
and shrine?"

"It is many a year," the pilgrim sighed,
"Since I have thought upon faith
and creed;

The burdened and poor at my threshold
cried;

Had I time to study my lesser need?
And when I would pray for my own
soul's good,

They interrupted with cries for food.

"I should lift my head from the Father's
breast,

If I were in heaven, and heard their
cry;

How could I selfishly take my rest,
Thinking of wearier ones than I?
I would slip from the ranks of the
undefiled
To comfort the woes of a little child ! ”

“ Peace ! Has the Father forsaken his
throne ? ”

The angel answered with stern sur-
prise.

“ Has his arm grown short, that he
needs thy own, —

Have the woes of the world escaped
his eyes ? ”

But see ! the Master himself draws
near, —

Thy foolish story hath reached his ear.”

The woman lifted her troubled brow,
And the mists of earth from her
spirit fell ;

No stranger’s face did she gaze on
now, —

She knew the Christ; she had loved
Him well;
She had met those eyes, with their
tender grace,
On the earth in many a suffering face!

They had often looked from a beggar's
hood,
From under a motherless baby's hair;
They had pierced her often, reproached
her, wooed,—
Had beckoned her here, had followed
her there;
In many and many a strange disguise
She had met the gaze of those pleading
eyes!

His voice was sweet to the tired one;
His touch was balm to her down-bent
head,—
"What thou to the least of my poor
hast done,

"Ye have done it unto Me." 19

Thou hast done unto me," he gently said.

"In my Father's house there are many rooms;"

And He led her in from the earthly glooms.

WHEN WE PRAY.



S tired children go at candle-light, —
The glow in their young eyes
quenched with the sun,
Almost too languid, now that play is
done,
To seek their father's knee, and say
“good-night,” —
So, to our greater Father out of sight,
When the brief gamut of the day is
run,
Defeats endured, and petty triumphs
won,
We kneel and listlessly his care invite.

Then, with no sense of gain, — no tender thrill,
As when we leave the presence of a friend;
No lingering content our souls to steep, —
But reckoning our gains and losses still,
We turn the leaf upon the dull day's end,
And, oarless, drift out to the sea of sleep.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

 HAT sorrow we should beckon
unawares,
What stinging nettles in our
path would grow,
If God should answer all our thought-
less prayers,
Or bring to harvest the poor seed we
sow !

The storm for which you prayed, whose
kindly shock
Revived your fields and blessed the
fainting air,
Drove a strong ship upon the cruel
rock,
And one I loved went down in ship-
wreck there.

I ask for sunshine on my grapes to-day;
You plead for rain to kiss your
drooping flowers;
And thus within God's patient hand we
lay
These intricate cross-purposes of ours.

I greeted with cold grace and doubting
fears
The guest who proved an angel at my
side;
And I have shed more bitter, burning
tears
Because of hopes fulfilled than prayers
denied.

Then be not clamorous, O restless soul,
But hold thy trust in God's eternal
plan;
He views our life's dull weaving as a
whole,—
Only its tangled threads are seen by
man!

Dear Lord, vain repetitions are not meet
When we would bring our messages
to thee;
Help us to lay them, then, at thy dear
feet
In acquiescence, not garrulity.

MY UNINVITED GUEST.

NE day there entered at my
chamber door
A presence whose light foot-
fall on the floor
No token gave; and, ere I could with-
stand,
Within her clasp she drew my trembling
hand.

“Intrusive guest,” I cried, “my palm I
lend
But to the gracious pressure of a
friend!
Why comest thou, unbidden and in
gloom,
Trailing thy cold gray garments in my
room?

“I know thee, Pain ! Thou art the sul-
len foe
Of every sweet enjoyment here below ;
Thou art the comrade and ally of Death,
And timid mortals shrink from thy cold
breath.

“No fragrant balms grow in thy garden
beds,
Nor slumbrous poppies droop their
crimson heads ;
And well I know thou comest to me
now
To bind thy burning chains upon my
brow ! ”

And though my puny will stood
straightly up,
From that day forth I drank her pun-
gent cup,
And ate her bitter bread, — with leaves
of rue,
Which in her sunless gardens rankly
grew.

And now, so long it is, I scarce can
tell

When Pain within my chamber came to
dwell;

And though she is not fair of mien or
face,

She hath attracted to my humble place

A company most gracious and refined,
Whose touches are like balm, whose
voices kind:

Sweet Sympathy, with box of ointment
rare;

Courage, who sings while she sits
weaving there;

Brave Patience, whom my heart esteem-
eth much,

And who hath wondrous virtue in her
touch.

Such is the chaste and sweet society
Which Pain, my faithful foe, hath
brought to me.

And now upon my threshold there she stands,
Reaching to me her rough yet kindly hands
In silent truce. Thus for a time we part,
And a great gladness overflows my heart;

For she is so ungentle in her way
That no host welcomes her or bids her stay;
Yet, though men bolt and bar their house from thee,
To every door, O Pain, thou hast a key !

HIS NAME.

HEN I shall go where my
Redeemer is,
In the far City, on the other
side,

And at the threshold of his palaces
Shall loose my sandals, ever to abide,
I know my Heavenly King will smiling
wait
To give me welcome as I reach the
gate.

Oh, joy! oh, bliss! for I shall see his
face,
And wear his blessed Name upon my
brow, —
That Name which stands for pardon,
love, and grace, —

That Name before which every knee
shall bow;
No music half so sweet can ever be,
As that dear Name which he shall
write for me!

Crowned with this royal signet, I shall
walk
With lifted forehead through the
eternal street,
And with a holier mien and gentler
talk
Will tell my story to the friends I
meet,—
Of how the King did stoop his Name
to write
Upon my brow in characters of light.

Then, till I go to meet my Father's
smile,
I 'll keep my forehead smooth from
passion's scars,—

From angry frowns that trample and
defile,
And every sin that desecrates and
mars,
That I may lift a face unflushed with
shame,
Whereon my Lord may write his holy
Name!

IF THIS WERE TWENTY CENTURIES AGO.



F this were twenty centuries ago,
And three wise men should seek my house, and say:
“We bring glad tidings! Christ is born to-day;
Arise, and follow yonder star, whose glow
Will lead you to the child!” — would I obey,
If this were twenty centuries ago?

From out my urn of precious, hoarded things
Would I make haste to pour the richest share

For him? The sweetest of my perfumes spare

To bathe the feet of the young King of kings?

Or break the costliest ointment on his hair

From out my urn of precious, hoarded things?

Alas! I dare not say this would I do,
Since I have slighted many another guest

That came from God,—have stayed from many a quest

That would have led me to the good and true,

To slumber on with head upon my breast;

Nay, nay! I dare not say this would I do.

My best resolves like shifting shadows are;

Each day some holy light shines on unsought,—

And while my silly, fluttering wings are
caught
By the world's rosy candle, Christ's
own star —
How can I tell? — might beckon me for
naught;
My best resolves like shifting shadows
are.

And when Christ comes again, — as
come he will —
And wise ones hasten forth with rapt
delight
To welcome him, and own his kingly
right,
Will men be questioning and doubting
still,
As when upon that first, far Christmas
night, —
When Christ shall come again, — as
come he will?

THE SLIGHTED FLOWERS.

 HE slept; and the dream of
Heaven
With its rapturous surprise,
Had folded the silken lashes
Over the tender eyes;
And the peace which passeth knowl-
edge
Seemed, to our mortal sight,
To circle the pallid forehead
With a ring of holy light.

She lay while we piled the lilies,
Like drifts of odorous snow,
On the breast whose thoughts were
whiter
Than milkiest flowers that blow.

We braided them in her tresses,
Their petals caressed her face,
But she who had loved the lilies
Was heedless now of their grace.

She slighted the timid beauty
Of violets, chaste and sweet,
That trailed like a purple ribbon
From girdle to unshod feet.
And she uttered no word of chiding,
When we crushed a rose in our hand;
So we knew by these silent tokens
She had gone to the Unknown Land.

MARY WAKEFIELD.



GAINST the painted hell of
Angelo

I set this living picture of
despair:

A burning ship, strong men distraught
with woe,

Rough seamen's oaths, which meant
not oaths, but prayer;

White pleading faces, little children's
cries,

And women's arms flung upward to
the skies !

Along the burning deck a woman
sped

While the red horror close and closer
pressed

Until its hot breath scorched her baby's
head,

Hiding itself within her throbbing
breast;

When, shrinking backward from the
flames' mad kiss,

She reeled into the water's black abyss!

Poor mother! Was it granted her to
see,

Ere sight was veiled by the engulfing
wave,

The noble girl whose arms so lustily
Wrested from her the babe she could
not save;

And dared, in a baptismal scene so
wild,

To stand as sponsor to this orphaned
child?

And this was Mary Wakefield. Dauntless girl,

Who, with a child across her shoulder thrown,

Set out to wage with death against the whirl

Of those mad waves, hand-fettered and alone !

A deed that gave her right to stand erect
With seraphim, nor show them disrespect !

With one firm hand she held against
the tide

The sobbing child. The other tightly
grasped

A fender swinging from the steamer's
side,

By a stout cable to the railing clasped ;
She drew the heavy beam on inch by
inch

Toward the nearest flame, nor did she
flinch

Though the hot tongues came hissing
at her brow.

With patient toil she guided on the
rope

To where the flame could bite at it; and
now

She has the joyful answer to her hope!

It burns asunder, and the heavy beam
Drops down before her into the black
stream!

Upon this strange steed's back she then
set down

The little child. And pushing on
before

Holding between her teeth the baby's
gown,

She struck out bravely for the distant
shore,

A league away, with well-aimed, steady
strides,

While on its dripping steed the baby
rides!

As rose and fell the girl's white oars,
 the rain

Thrummed its dull monotone. The
 thunders rolled

Their heavy drums. The wind swept
 a refrain.

Some distant bells the hour of mid-
 night told.

And now and then the lightning's vivid
 thread

Through the thick darkness wove a
 seam of red!

Strong men went shuddering down to
 death that night,

Whose arms were like to knitted
 strands of steel,

While this slight girl waged an unequal
 fight

For two — making no loud appeal

To God, but praying mutely with her
 arms,

Seeking the while to sooth the child's
 alarms !

“Hush, little one! Home is not far away,
And I am here holding you by your gown,
Just as old Rover holds you when at play;
And with my strong arms plashing up and down,
I make your queer horse gallop to the shore,
And baby shall be cold and wet no more!”

Then, with a tenderness almost divine,
She tried to thrust a merry nursery song
Through her shut teeth; and while
each panting line.
Smote on her jaded breath like smarting thong,
I think God ringed her with an unseen crown,
And every face in heaven bent softly down!

And thus she won the shore. There on
the sands
A seaman lay, half naked, cold and
faint.
Unfastening her gown with shivering
hands,
She laid it on him. Then this gentle
saint
Lifted the sleeping baby to her breast,
And toiled, half-fainting, to a place of
rest!

THE WEARY MODEL.

NE day, an artist in his studio,
Upon his model draped a
quaint old gown,
Of some rare Indian stuff, wove long
ago
Of countless mellow shades of gold
and brown,—
Sunshine and shadow, like the shining
hair
That Raphael made his sweet Madonnas
wear.

Silent and passive, as if carved of stone,
Stood the young model in her love-
liness;

For now the tireless artist sought alone
To paint the gold-brown shimmer of
the dress;
Nor must she stir the robe which flashed
and shone,—
Hers to be patient and be wrought
upon.

At last the sinuous folds were all com-
plete;
Like a soft wave they bathed the
pliant girl,
And, rippling from the shoulders to the
feet,
Fell on the carpet in a silken swirl:
And then the painter on his canvas
wrought,
Trying to paint the language of his
thought.

All day the magic colors softly flowed,
Until it seemed as if some wondrous
spell

Possessed the hour, and like a radiance
glowed
In the fair lines that on his canvas
fell:
And as the hours, down-shod, went
slipping past,
His dream of fame seemed blossoming
at last.

See how the witchery of that old dress
Makes a soft mirror of the canvas,
where,
The artist, with a lover's tenderness,
Bestows faint glints of lustre here and
there!
Almost to his quick fancy the folds
stir
With their old scents of rosemary and
myrrh!

Just then the weary girl forgetful grew
And swept a hand along each flowing
line,

Alas, a hundred ripples straightway flew
In answer to that little heedless sign !
The glistening folds were changed from
 belt to hem,
All the familiar grace gone out of them.

The startled girl looked in the artist's
 face
And read the story of his loss and
 pain.
She could not call the lines back to
 their place,
Regret and sighing were alike in
 vain.
Naught can revive an inspiration dead ;
The golden vision had forever fled !

What lesson, O my soul, is here for
 thee
That chideth this poor model over-
 much?
To stand henceforth more still and
 patiently

Beneath the fashioning of God's fine
touch!

For ah, what grace by the Great Artist
planned

Has been effaced by thy impatient
hand!

PARTING COMRADES.



DIEU, kind Life, though thou
hast often been
Lavish of quip, and scant of
courtesy,

Beneath thy roughness I have found in
thee

A host who doth my parting favor
win.

Friend, teacher, sage, and sometimes
harlequin,

Thine every mood hath held some good
for me,—

Nor ever friendlier seemed thy company
Than on this night when I must quit
thine inn.

I love thee, Life, in spite of thy rude
ways!

Dear is thy pleasant house, so long
my home.

I thank thee for the hospitable days,
The friends, the rugged cheer. Then,
landlord, come!

Pour me a stirrup cup,—our parting
nears;

I ever liked thy wine, though salt with
tears.

UNSEEN GUESTS.

 E have come back — the absent
whom you miss —
To pledge with you before the
feast is done :

You do not feel our tender clasp and
kiss,

Nor hear us softly enter one by one.

Your voices drown our signals faint and
low,

But pledge your unseen guests before
you go.

We waft our souls to you as thistle-
blooms

Launch on the winds their airy mar-
iners, —

O Hearts ! Spread wide for us your
pleasant rooms,

Nor coldly greet the eager travellers !
From your fair loving cup a draught
bestow
On friends of "auld lang syne," before
you go.

Our memory spells the very flowers you
wear, —

The roses in their crystal chalices !
She knows the tricks of speech, of eyes,
of hair : —

Ah ! 't is a faithful tapestry she weaves !
And since so fair and true her colors
show,

Then fill to Memory before you go.

And who can tell ? Perhaps they too
are here, —

Our angels whom we wrongly name our
dead !

Leaving their bliss awhile to linger near
Some heart that joy hath left unten-
anted.

Ah, friends ! They may be nearer than
we know,
Then pledge them tenderly before you
go !

Why do we call them dead from whose
hot grasp

God kindly takes a tear-embittered bowl,
And sets instead within the longing
clasp

His perfect cup of rapture ? Nay, sad
soul !

Name not God's richest gift to mortals so,
But quaff to Life, full Life, before you
go !

Love is the pilot of our silent crew ;
No boat so stanch, no sails so trim and
white.

Full well he knew the path that led to
you
Through trackless air, and sea, and
moonless night.

Nor aught cares he how wild the March
winds blow !

Then fill a glass to Love before you
go.

Good-bye ! Good-bye ! though Love
hath many ports

Where winds are soft and ships may lie
at rest,

Home is the sheltered bay he fondliest
courts, —

Home is the little harbor he loves best.

Hither we sail away, — yo ho ! yo ho !

Then drain the glass to Home before
you go.

THRESCORE AND TEN.



AM past my threescore years
and ten;

I have quaffed full cups of
bliss and bane;

Grown drunk on folly like other men,

With its present sweet and after-pain;
I have had my share of cloud and sun;
And what is it all, when all is done?

We have had our frolic, Life and I;

Jovial comrades we used to be.

Full sails to-day, with a silver sky,

Anon dead calm and a sullen sea.

Now I fear the waves, so I hug the
shore

With my tattered sail and broken oar.

I have worn love's flower upon my breast,
And said my prayers to a woman's
face.

The saints forgive us ! If men addressed
Such orisons to the heavenly Grace,
They would upward mount, as strong
birds do,
And answer bring from the heavenly
blue !

I have known the best that life can hold
Of fame and fortune, love and power.
And when my riotous blood grew cold,
I cheered with books the lingering
hour ;
Banqueting on the costly wine
Which Genius pours from her flagons
fine.

Yet I would rather lie to-day
Where orchard blooms drift down
their snow,
And feel lost youth in my pulses play,

Its rosy wine in my hot cheeks glow ;
I would rather be young, — and foolish,
 forsooth, —
Than own the baubles we buy with
youth.

I would barter fortune, fame, and power,
 All knowledge gained of books and
men,
For my old delight at the first spring
 flower,
A robin's egg, or a captured wren
From its nest hid under the tossing
 plume
Of a sweet, old-fashioned lilac bloom.

With the world's stale feast I am sur-
feited ;
I long to-day for the old-time thrill
At the purple pomp of a pansy bed,
 Or the fresh spring scent of a daffodil.
Alas, I shall never be thrilled again !
I am old, — yes, past threescore and ten.

A MARCH WEDDING.



IMPATIENT lovers, have you
then no care
That summer holds a month
divinely fair;
When laughing brooks and softly whis-
pering trees
Chime with the tune of birds and hum
of bees;
When color, light, and perfume every-
where,
Toss out their sumptuous banners to
the air?
Wait, then, for June, and pin the bridal
veil
With hyacinths and lilies sweet and
pale.

And yet, what matter how the March
winds blow?
You make your own fair summer as
you go;
Love hath, like death, all seasons for
her own,
And in each month sets up her rosy
throne.
And I,— worn, weary, and oppressed
with care,
The dust of travel white upon my
hair,—
Would give the listless years now left
to me
For one swift moment of your ecstasy!

A GIFT OF GENTIANS.



E timid, fluttering things, whose
fringes rare
Are dipped in colors drawn
from babies' eyes ;
Whose robe of gossamer is spun of air,
In the same loom with June's deli-
cious skies ;
Whose dainty hems, and skirts so silken
fine,
The fairies trust no awkward brush to
trace ;
Much do I marvel that, with added line,
A mortal's hand can paint each flower-
face !
But know you not the one who sought
you out

Holds in his palm such magic strong
and fine

That it has even wrapped thy grace
about

With something more delightful and
divine?

And so, with glad obeisance, do I greet
Our first acquaintance,—tender, blue-
eyed things!

For with a benediction good and sweet,
You fold within my hands your
feathery wings.

And from this day your azure wells
shall be

The mirror of a face so true and
good,

Your sweet suggestions can but be to
me

The impulse to a better womanhood!

HIS BIRTHDAY.

 HE day the Christ-child's tender
eyes
Unveiled their beauty on the
earth,
God lit a new star in the skies
To flash the message of his birth;
And wise men read the glowing sign,
And came to greet the Child divine.

Low kneeling in the stable's gloom
Their precious treasures they un-
rolled;
The place was rich with sweet perfume;
Upon the floor lay gifts of gold.
And thus, adoring, they did bring
To Christ the earliest offering.

I think no nimbus wreathed the head
Of the young King so rudely throned;
The quilt of hay beneath him spread
The sleepy kine beside him owned;
And here and there in the torn thatch
The sky thrust in a starry patch.

Oh, when was new-born monarch
shrinéd
Within such canopy as this?
The birds have cradles feather-lined;
And for their new babes princesses
Have sheets of lace without a flaw,—
His pillow was a wisp of straw!

He chose this way, it may have been,
That those poor mothers, everywhere,
Whose babies in the world's great inn
Find scanty cradle-room and fare,
As did the babe of Bethlehem,
May find somewhat to comfort them.

Thus was he born. And since that time
We crown the day with wreath and
song;

The bells laugh out in merry chime,
And he his royal Guest doth wrong
Who welcomes him with gloomy fears,
Or salts the birthday feast with tears.

COMING HOME.



HAVE come to the dear old
threshold,
With eager, hurrying feet,
To scent the odorous lilies
That once were so white and sweet.
To taste the apricots mellow
That crimson the garden wall;
To gather the golden pippins
That down in the orchard fall.

I passed by the uncut hedges,
And up through the thistled walk,
And beside the fall of my footsteps
There was only the crickets' talk.
The weeds grew high in the arbor,
And the nettles, rank and tall,
Had throttled the sweet-breathed lilies
That leaned on the latticed wall.

The little white house is empty,
Its ceilings are cobwebbed o'er,
And the dust and mould are lying
Thick on the trackless floor.

There are no prints in the doorway,
No garments hung in the hall,
And the ghosts of death and silence
Sit and gloat over all !

No eager faces of children
Brightened the window-pane,
Never a peal of laughter
Rippled along the lane ;
So I turned through the daisies yellow,
That nodded to see me pass,
To seek for the mellow pippins
That drop in the orchard grass.

But I found a worm in my apples,
And flung them sadly away ;
The pool that I thought eternal
All foul and poisonous lay.

A black snake crept from its hiding
And hissed in the marshes wild,
And I bent my head in the rushes
And sobbed like a homesick child !

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER.

 OR toil that is a medicine for
woe,

For strength that grows with
every lifted cross,
For thorns, since with each thorn a rose
did grow,

For gain that I have wrongly reck-
oned loss,

For ignorance, where it were harm to
know,—

Teach me to thank thee, Lord.

For cups of honeyed pleasure thou
didst spill

Before their foam had quenched my
purer sense;

For that my soul has power to struggle
still,

Though panting in the trappings of
pretence;
And for mistakes that saved from
greater ill,—
Teach me to thank thee, Lord.

That thou dost ravel out the tinselled
thread
Of my poor work I thought so bravely
done;
That thou dost show me every flimsy
shred
In the thin coat of honor I have
spun,
And pluck'st the slender garland from
my head,—
Teach me to thank thee, Lord.

For ills averted, all unseen by me,
For darkened days that healed my
dazzled eyes,
For suffering which brought a com-
pany

Of gentle ministers, in stern disguise;
For weariness, which made me lean on
thee, —

Teach me to thank thee, Lord.

For chalices of tears that thou dost
pour,

For unrequited love and wounded
pride;

If they but tempt my lonesome heart
the more

To seek the faithful shelter of thy
side;

For homelessness, which drives me to
thy door, —

Teach me to thank thee, Lord.

THE INN OF REST.



OILING among my garden
thorns one day,
While in a stirless swoon the
hot air lay,
A traveller passed toward the glowing
west,
Who seemed intent upon some cheer-
ful quest,
For with a song he did beguile the way.
Perhaps some question stirred within
my eyes,
For thus he spake: "In yonder valley
lies,
Among the murmurous trees, the Inn
called *Rest*;
Where all the pillows are with poppies
strewn,
Where toil-worn feet are shod with
silken shoon,

And bed of down awaits each jaded
guest;

I haste at this good Inn to make request,
For see! the dial marks the hour of
noon."

"God grant," I cried, "you reach
that threshold soon!"

The singer passed, and in the winding
lane

I lost at length the thread of his
refrain.

One Sabbath eve, consoled and com-
forted

By chant and prayer at vesper-service
said,

With a *Laus Deo* thrilling through my
pain,

I left the church, and careless where
I went,

Behind its ivied walls my footsteps
bent,

Among the low green tents where dwell
the dead.

The chill winds sobbed among the
grasses sere
Which thatched the narrow roofs.
The sky was drear,
And drops of rain fell on my down-bent
head.
Turning to go, upon a stone I read
A name, and dropped upon these
words a tear:
“He sought an Inn of Rest, and
found it—here.”

A STRADIVARIUS VIOLIN.



HE music of this ancient violin
Is haunted as men's chambers
sometimes are.

Along the liquid ladder of each bar
Phantoms of pleasure dance; Regret
steals in,
With happier ghosts, and Fate her
wheel doth spin.

Torn butterflies of hope a breath did
mar
Here flutter, like the flame within a star.
And if thou wouldst, O soul, nepenthe
win,
Pause not beside this portal, lest thou
hear
The voice of thy dead sorrow whis-
pering near!

For every passion that thy life hath
known,—
Anguish benumbed, and love thou
thought'st flown,—
Among these peerless octaves veiled,
wait
To speak to thee across the stringèd
gate.

AN OCTOBER BANQUET.

ITH many a curve of her brown
wrist,
The hospitable vine,
In clustered bowls of amethyst,
Hands down her unpressed wine.

A gentle courtesy is hers ;
She works her guests no ill ;
The simple goblet she confers
Imparts no fever-thrill.

I fling the drained and broken cups
Among the garden trees ;
While butterfly comes down and sups
Upon the honeyed lees.

TRUST.

ITHIN the slender chalice of
thy hand
Hold fast what I give thee;
and drop down, too,
The fringes of those tender flowers
of blue,—
Thy wondering eyes,— nor question
nor withstand
What I may give. Perhaps my love
hath planned
Some sweet surprise, or test if love
be true.
What if it be a sprig of bitterest rue,
A swift, strange summons to an un-
known land,
A hurting thorn, a cross? Strange
gifts, I know,

For love to bring ; but wouldest thou
trust me still?

Quick, dear, — thine answer !

“ I should trust until
The hidden meaning in thy gift should
show.”

Ah, sweet ! when God sends just
such gifts to thee
Canst thou not answer him as thou
dost me ?

THE PERFECT NICHE.



IKE some rare structure seen
but in our dreams,
And builded of aerial warp
and woof,

Milan Cathedral to my vision seems,
With its fair towers and transcendent
roof.

I see it now as on that perfect day,
When last I climbed to where its
glistening spires,
Like a great field of sculptured lilies
lay,
Fadeless and bright beneath the
noonday fires.

Through the rich fretwork the Italian
sky

Thrusts its fine color, like an azure
flower;

And in the silent night the stars on high
Hang their soft lamps within each
slender tower.

And niched away within the airy loft,
Where the bell's clamor wounds the
quiet air,

And the world's noises grow subdued
and soft

When they have climbed to the white
chambers there, —

Within an arch, enriched with chiselled
lace,

Is a pure image, by Canova wrought,
Where none may mount its snowy lines
to trace,

Or read the graceful language of his
thought.

Art may not slake her eager, burning
gaze

Beside this frozen fountain of delight;
Nor golden hammer break the carven
vase

That hides the costly incense from
our sight.

Like one white petal of a perfect bloom,
Enfolded where no human eye can see,
Canova's statue stands through sun and
gloom,

And makes its shrine a snowy har-
mony.

O life, my life! that cravest larger
place,

Prating of rusted gifts, of pinioned
feet,

Peace!—thou wilt need thine own and
borrowed grace,

If thou wouldst make thy narrow
niche complete.

CHRIST HAS RISEN!



sad-faced mourners, who each
day are wending
Through churchyard paths of
cypress and of yew,
Leave, for to-day, the low graves you
are tending,
And lift your eyes to God's eternal
blue !

Leave, for to-day, all murmuring and
sadness ;
Twine Easter lilies, and not aspho-
del's ;
Let your souls answer to the thrill of
gladness,
And to the melody of Easter bells.

If Christ were still within the grave's
low prison, —

A captive to the enemy you dread;
If from that mouldering cell he had not
risen,

Who then could chide the bitter tears
you shed?

Poor hearts! the butterfly, with pinions
golden,

Spurns the gray cell which erst its
freedom barred;

And the freed soul, with wings no
longer holden,

Smiles back on life as on a broken
shard.

If Christ were dead, you would have
need to sorrow;

But he has risen, and conquered
death for aye!

Then dry your tears, if only till the
morrow;

Arise, and give your grief a holiday!

“BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE
DOOR.”



HEAR thy knock, O Lord,
but, woe is me!
I have been busy in the
world's great mart,
And have no table spread within my
heart,
Nor any room made beautiful for thee
With burnished lamp and sprigs of
rosemary;
And should thy stainless hands the
curtains part,
Thy tender eyes would miss the
joyous start,—
The happy tears, the reverent ecstasy.

Neglected is the house thy love doth
lend;
The ashes of dead fires bestrew the
hearth;
And still I hear thy voice. O Heavenly
Friend,
Come down to sup with me upon the
earth,
What if at last thou shouldst the slight
repay,
And welcome me as I do thee to-day?

DEAD BIRDS AND EASTER.

T was an Easter morning, bright
and calm,
And life, not death, was the
glad theme that day;
The air was full of spring's delicious
balm;
The maple buds were drooping on
the way;
And one sweet leaf, with flush of crim-
son on it,
Fell on the dead birds of a woman's
bonnet.

What say the bells at these good Easter
times?
They tell of vanquished death and
risen life.

Hush, then, O bells, your inconsistent
chimes,
You and the dull old world are hard
at strife ;
For surely, when the crimson leaf fell
on it,
I saw dead birds upon a woman's
bonnet !

What does it cost,— this garniture of
death?
It costs the life which God alone can
give ;
It costs dull silence where was music's
breath ;
It costs dead joy, that foolish pride
may live.
Ah, life, and joy, and song— depend
upon it—
Are costly trimmings for a woman's
bonnet !

Oh, who would stop the sweet pulse of
a lark,

That flutters in such ecstacy of bliss,
Or lay a robin's bright breast cold and
stark,

For such a paltry recompense as this?
Oh, you who love your babies, think
upon it,—

Mothers are slaughtered, just to trim
your bonnet!

Will Herod never cease to rule the
land,

That we must slay sweet innocency
so?

Is joy so cheap, or happiness sure
planned?

Tell me, O friend, who art acquaint
with woe!

Does thy sad heart proclaim no protest
on it?

Wouldst *thou* slay happiness, just for a
bonnet?

And must God's choirs that through his
forests rove,

Granting sweet *matinées* to high and
low,

Must his own orchestra of field and
grove—

Himself their leader—be disbanded
so?

Nay, nay! O God, proclaim thy ban
upon it,—

Guard thy dear birds from sport, and
greed, and bonnet!

Their fine-spun hammocks, swinging in
the breeze,

Should be as safe as babies' cradles
are;

And no rude hand that tears them
from the trees,

Or dares a sweet bird's property
to mar,

Deserves a woman's touch or kiss
upon it,
Unless — she wears dead birds upon
her bonnet!

Dead birds! and dead for gentle
woman's sake,
To feed awhile her vanity's poor
breath;
And yet the foolish bells sweet clamor
make
And tell of One whose power hath van-
quished death!
Ah, Easter-time has a reproach upon it
While birds are slain to trim a woman's
bonnet!

PURPLE ASTER.

 RAVELY my sweet flower resists
Heat of August, autumn cold ;
And though she has amethysts
For her dower, and some gold,
Never roadside beggar passed her
Without nod from purple aster.

Dear plebeian, but for thee
And thy lover, golden-rod,
Lonesomer the road would be
Which the country folk must plod ;
And each little maid and master
Would regret thee, purple aster !

When November winds blow chill,
And the fields are brown and sear,
You will find her, cheerful still,
With her lover standing near,
While old Winter fast and faster
Comes to claim brave purple aster.

AURORA BOREALIS.

HE northern cheek of the
heavens,
By a sudden glory kissed,
Blushed to the tint of roses,
And hid in an amber mist,
And through the northern pathway,
Trailing her robe of flame,
The queenly Borealis
In her dazzling beauty came !

I stood and watched the tilting
Of each dainty, rosy lance,
As it seemed to pierce the bosom
Of an emerald expanse;
And I thought if heaven's gateway
Is so very fair to see,
What must the inner glory
Of the "many mansions" be?

I thought of the “Golden City,”
Where the wondrous lights unfurl;
Of its sea of clearest crystal,
Of its gates,—each one a pearl;
Thought, till the glowing splendor
Had quietly passed us by,
And the track of Aurora’s chariot
Bleached out from the northern sky!

MEXICO.



ITHIN thy blue-domed Garden
of Delight,
Dwells the elusive Spirit of
Content,
And makes thy people's lot benefi-
cent.
With thee her wings forget their trick
of flight,
And brood above thy dwellers day and
night.
For thee Euterpe brings her blandish-
ment,
And Beauty hath her cornucopia spent.
Thy winds are sheathed with velvet, and
their might
Is tempered to the little naked child.

God made thee for the old and shelterless,

And bids fair Nature hide her moods morose.

Thy patios with violets are tiled,

The air enfolds thee in its warm caress,

And Summer never bids thee *adios!*

WEAKNESS.

 HAT ills escape upon the world
to-day
Through the loose meshes of
a pliant will!
Weakness is an ignoble mistress; still,
While Passion may with bolder weapons
slay,
Insidious Weakness doth hold equal
sway,—
For with such drugs she does men's
senses fill,
They sleep upon her knees, nor dream
of ill;
Then Samson has the old sad price to
pay.

From Pilate's hand she drew the sceptre
down;
For while he cried, "What evil hath
He done?"
"He feared the people" and King
Cæsar's frown
More than the anguish of the Sinless
One,
And Weakness made him miss the
truest fame
That ever stooped to crown a ruler's
name!

SOME VIOLETS.

EAR friend, I give thee violets ;
And for my fee,
The fragrant secret of thy life
Disclose to me.

For through it, like a guiding thread,
I scent the rue,
And faintly track the odorous feet
Of heart's-ease too.

Reach down on patient cords to me
Thy brimming cup
Of wise, sweet thoughts, that I may
drink,
And thus toil up

To where thou art, so meekly high,
So far away,
I can but kiss my eager hands
To thee to-day.

Or, if I may not reach so high,
 Then be it so;
If I may sit beside thy feet,
 'T will not be low.

And, listening soft, my soul may catch
 In some far sense
The tuneful impulse of a life
 Serene, intense.

Ah, me! I do but spoil my work
 With clumsy phrase;
And mar, with my uncultured speech,
 Where I would praise.

So I will lay my heart's-ease down
 At thy kind feet;
Regretting sore their broken stems,
 Their vanished sweet,

Yet praying that their faded blue
 Some type may be
Of the fair badge my heart shall wear
 Always for thee!

WE ARE UNFAITHFUL.



F man could rule, his love of
change would mar
The purple dignity that wraps
the hills;
Pluck out from the blue sky some per-
fect star,
And set it elsewhere, as his fancy
wills:

Train the gnarled apple-tree more
straightly up;
Lift violet's head, so long and meekly
bowed;
With some new odor fill her purple cup,
And gild the rosy fringes of a cloud.

For, mark ! last year I loved the violet
best,

And tied her tender colors in my hair ;
To-day I wear on my inconstant breast
A crimson rose, and count her just as
fair:

We are unfaithful. Only God is true
To hold secure the landmarks of the
past,

To paint year after year the harebell
blue,

And in the same sweet mould its
shape to cast.

Oh, steadfast Nature, let us learn of
thee !

Thou canst create a new flower at thy
will,

And yet through all the years canst
faithful be

To the sweet pattern of a daffodil.

THE BURIAL OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.*

E mourn for him whose soul on
heights divine
Has reached the stature of the
undefiled,
In whom a judgment ripe and honor fine
Were blended with the nature of a
child;
Whose pen with patient toil and godlike
grace
Picked out the puzzled knot of
slavery;
Unclasped the gyves that bound a hap-
less race,
And dared to write “the bondman
shall be free.”

* Written by request, for the occasion of
the depositing of Abraham Lincoln's remains
in the tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery, Spring-
field, Ill.

The kind humanities that graced his life,
The tenderness which through his
justice shone;

The sympathy that softened human
strife

And made a brother's suffering his
own;

The life which shadowed forth the per-
fect plan

Of heaven's law of equity and right:

Such were the attributes, and such the
man

Whom death has hidden from our
mortal sight.

His deeds move onward, though his life
is done;

His words still sway us like a mighty
host.

“Write down,” he said, “my humble
name as one

Whose love of country was his highest
boast.”

O man of men, whose name we all
revere! —

The dearest name in Liberty's fair
crown! —

Only thy corse rests in these chambers
here;

Death cannot touch thy honor and
renown!

Along the years his gentle words shall
fall, —

“ With malice towards none, with
charity for all; ”

And men shall write in tears upon his
grave,

“ He bound the nation, and unbound
the slave.”

CRITICISM.



SONG-SPARROW who had
her choice of place
The orchards over,
Espied within a bare, unsheltered space
A tuft of clover;

And here, almost beneath the passers'
feet,
Her nest confided,
While robin, with a trill of laughter
sweet,
Softly derided.

An English sparrow, curious at her
choice,
Peeped boldly under,
And cried out, in his pert plebeian
voice,
“Oh, what a blunder!”

But when the roses came, I sought the
nest
Of my brown sitter,
And heard, beneath her patient brood-
ing breast,
Young sparrows twitter.

And when the withered roses strewed
the ground,
The fields were ringing
With the delicious and uncertain sound
Of young birds singing.

It was the sparrows, safely fledged ! and
yet
To human reason
That open nest, amid such dangers set,
Seemed arrant treason.

And while these birds, serene and un-
afraid,
As in a tower,
Dwelt in the careless nest that they had
made
Beneath a flower,

A wind had rent the sturdy apple-tree,
Where robin nested;
And from their snug, round bed her
babies three
Were rudely wrested.

WHITE VIOLETS.

E sought for the white violet,
My little love and I;
Among the pastures cool and
wet,

Our feet in eager quest were set
The dainty bloom to spy.

We knew where purple ones and blue
Were thick as stars at night;
But all our forest journeys through
We had not found a spot where grew
A violet of white.

Like some sweet nun, ethereal thin,
You'd know her anywhere,
With snowy wimple folded in
About her pale and serious chin,
And head bent as in prayer.

In firry cloisters, spicy sweet,
We sought our pale-faced nun.
No trace was here of her light feet;
Only a spider, trim and neat,
Sat in the door and spun.

Where the May-apple leaves had spread
A tent of shining green,
A moth in his gray hammock stayed,
A hermit snail sulked in the shade,
But Violet was not seen.

The snowy star of Bethlehem
Twinkled beside our way;
The forest's fern-embroidered hem
Glowed with red lilies, stem on stem:
But where did Violet stay?

“Why seek white violets alone,
My love,” at last I cried,
“When banks with purple ones are
strewn,
Fit for the cover of a throne,
And coronet beside?”

“ Things won,” she said, “ with little care
Are seldom coveted;
White violets, like pearls, are rare,
Like amethysts the purple are,
I choose the pearls,” she said.

We heard the insects’ drowsy croon,
Bees in the thistles slept;
The wood-thrush piped his liquid tune,
The morn led up to sultry noon,
The noon to evening crept.

We found not one white violet;
We know not where they grow.
But there are fairer treasures yet,
Sometimes, in woods and hollows wet,
As we who found them know.

IN PRISON.

 OD pity the wretched prisoners,
 In their lonely cells to-day;
 Whatever the sins that tripped
 them,
 God pity them, still I say.

Only a strip of sunshine,
 Cleft by rusty bars;
 Only a patch of azure,
 Only a cluster of stars;
 Only a barren future
 To starve their hope upon;
 Only stinging memories
 Of love and honor gone;
 Only scorn from women,
 Only hate from men,
 Only remorse to whisper
 Of a life that might have been.

Once they were little children,
And perhaps their unstained feet
Were led by a gentle mother
Toward the golden street;
Therefore, if in life's forest
They since have lost their way,
For the sake of her who loved them,
God pity them, still I say.

O mothers, gone to heaven !
With earnest heart I ask
That your eyes may not look earthward
On the failure of your task !
For even in those mansions
The choking tears would rise,
Though the fairest hand in heaven
Should wipe them from your eyes !

And you, who judge so harshly,
Are you sure the stumbling-stone
That tripped the feet of others
Might not have bruised your own ?

Are you sure the sad-faced angel
Who writes our errors down,
Will ascribe to you more honor
Than to those on whom you frown?

Or, if a steadier purpose
Unto your life is given,
A stronger will to conquer,
A smoother path to heaven;
If, when temptations meet you,
You crush them with a smile;
If you can chain pale passion
And keep your lips from guile, —

Then bless the Hand that crowned you,
Remembering, as you go,
'T was not your own endeavor
That shaped your nature so;
And sneer not at the weakness
Which made a brother fall,
For the hand that lifts the fallen
God loves the best of all!

And pray for the wretched prisoners
All over the land to-day,
That a holy Hand in pity
May wipe their guilt away.



OBSCURITY.

IKE jewels hid in Ethiopian's
breast
The forest wears its orchids,
and the sea
Hath richer pearls than glow in any mart;
Nature despiseth not obscurity.

She paints a world of rainbow-tinted
things
Upon the curtains of her solitudes;
And gems the air with countless flashing
things,
In places where no human foot in-
trudes.

Nor does she send her wood-thrush
where its notes
Will win the noisy plaudits of the
street;

Along the leafy aisles its echoes float,
And mingle with pine odours moist
and sweet.

What matter that no ear the song hath
heard?

That no applause along the dim woods
ran?

God needed just the music of this bird
To round the perfect octave of His
plan.

A FLOWER SERMON.



FOUND, within a churchyard
gray,
A marigold abloom one day,
And hotly said, "Oh, saucy elf,
Shame on thy pert and graceless self
To flaunt thy robes of yellow bloom
Among the shadows of the tomb,
And o'er the faces of the dead
To nod thy disrespectful head!
There is no fitness in thy dress,
Nor art thou modest, thus to press
Thy gaudy presence in the place
Where gladness never shows its face."

The startled flower replied: "What
claim
Hast thou to judge me? Or what shame
Should burn my cheeks because I wear
This yellow dress, which is my share
Of Nature's brightness, given to grace
The sombre shadows of this place?

I cannot harm the sleeping dead
Because I toss my golden head;
'T is all God meant for me to do,
To nod and smile the summer through.
Nor do I laugh while others weep
Through any malice, but to keep
God's perfect plan for my small life,
Unmarred by dissonance or strife;
For this I bloom beside a grave,
And wear the color that he gave."

I turned my flushing face away;
Nor will I try another day
To question any thought or plan
That God designs for flower or man.
Some lives are blithe their journey
through,
While others early find the rue.
Whatever color God hath wrought
Into our life or plan or thought,
He knows the best. There is no flaw
Nor dulness in God's perfect law!

THE NEW MESSAGE.



F ghosts of women dead a century
Steal back to earth,
Then verily to-night one talked to me
Upon my hearth.

And the pathetic minor of her tones,
Liquid with tears,
Was like a plaintive murmur from far
zones
And distant years.

“ Think not that I am come to you,” she
said,
“ This hallowed night
To gossip of the secrets of the dead
Or tell their plight.

“ I could not sleep; for lo! the Christ-
mas bells
A new tune rang:
‘ New birth to woman! ’ loud the pæan
swells
In rhythmic clang.

“ ‘ New birth to woman! ’ Once no right
had she
To choose her place;
Nor place had she save as man’s cour-
tesy
Did grant her grace.

“ Sometimes, by beauty, trick, or acci-
dent,
Grim fate she crossed;
But when from her obeisance she unbent,
Her power was lost.

“ O woman! fitly robed at last, and
crowned
With dignity;

Walking with lifted head your chosen
round,
Unfettered, free;

“ The barbarous traditions of the past
Loosed from your feet;
Life’s richest goblet held to you at last,
Brimming and sweet,—

“ Forget not those for whom too late,
alas !
Dawn flushed the sky,
And to their spirits drain a silent glass.
Of such am I.

“ Hark to the Christmas bells ! ‘ Good-
will toward men,
Peace on the earth ! ’
‘ And unto woman ! ’ — chime they forth
again —
‘ New birth ! New birth ! ’ ”

• • • • •

If ghosts of women dead a century
 Steal back to earth,
Then this same hour one came and
 talked to me
Beside my hearth.

CHRISTMAS ROSES.



GAVE into a brown and tired
hand

A stem of roses, sweet and
creamy white.

I know the bells rang merry tunes
that night,

For it was Christmas-time throughout
the land,

And all the skies were hung with lan-
terns bright.

The brown hand held my roses awk-
wardly;

They seemed more white within their
dusky vase;

The pale face glowed with pleasure
and with praise:

“These are for daintier hands than
mine!” cried she;
“Such beauty was not fashioned for
my gaze.”

Nay, tired one! Think, rather, that for
you

These flowers have struggled upward
from the clay

And journeyed on their patient, leafy
way

Brimming their cups with light, per-
fume, and dew,

To lay them in your palm this Christ-
mas day.

“AVERAGE” PEOPLE.



HE genius soars far to the fountain
That feeds the snow-cap in the sky;
But though our wings break in the flying,
And though our souls faint in the trying,
Our flight cannot follow so high;
And the eagle swoops not from the mountain
To answer the ground-bird's low cry.

The world has a gay guerdon ready
To hail the fleet foot in the race;
But on the dull highway of duty,
Aloof from the pomp and the beauty,

The stir and the chance of the chase,
Are toilers, with step true and steady,
Pursuing their wearisome pace.

False prowess and noisy insistence
May capture the garrulous throng;
But the “average” father and
brother,
The home-keeping sister and
mother,
Grown gentle and patient and strong,
Shall learn in the fast-nearing distance
Wherein life’s awards have been
wrong.

Then here’s to the “average” people,
The makers of home and its rest!
To them the world turns for a
blessing
When life its hard burdens is press-
ing,
For stay-at-home hearts are the best.
Birds build if they will in the steeple,
But safer the eaves for a nest.

MARCH.

N the dark silence of her chambers low,
March works out sweeter things
than mortals know.

Her noiseless looms ply on with busy care,
Weaving the fine cloth that the flowers wear.

She sews the seams in violet's queer hood,
And paints the sweet arbutus of the wood.

Out of a bit of sky's delicious blue
She fashions hyacinths, and harebells too;

And from a sunbeam makes a cowslip
fair,
Or spins a gown for daffodil to wear.

She pulls the cover from the crocus beds
And bids the sleepers lift their drowsy
heads.

She marshals the close armies of the
grass,
And polishes their green blades as they
pass.

And all the blossoms of the fruit-trees
sweet
Are piled in rosy shells about her feet.

Within her great alembic she distils
The dainty odor which each flower fills.

Nor does she err, and give to migno-
nette
The perfume which belongs to violet.

Nature does well whatever task she tries,
Because obedient. Here the secret lies.

What matter, then, that wild the March
winds blow?

Bear patiently her lingering frost and
snow!

For all the sweet beginnings of the
spring

Beneath her cold brown breast lie fluttering.

DISPROVED.



CANNOT think the dead come
ever back;
Else thou, my mother, wouldst
not calmly lie
Within thy grassy tent, but swiftly fly
Back through the shadowy and lonely
track
To seek the child who does thy comfort
lack.
The bliss of heaven thou wouldst thy
soul deny,
And, though so weary, all its rest
put by,
Rather than loneliness my heart should
rack.
Do souls return, my mother, and thy
kiss
Anoints not my sad eyes? Come back
and prove

How deeper than the grave is thy dear
love!

Never till now didst thou the pathway
miss

That led to me. Alas, no couriers move
From heaven to earth! Thine ab-
sence proveth this.

SAILING AWAY.



AILING away from our friendly
shores,
Passing the cloud-ships here
and there,

I watch the dip of your feathered oars,
Wise little mariners of the air!

With map nor guide-book under your
wing,
You safely travel the azure track,
And reckon the days from fall to spring
With never a sign of an almanac.

As I watch your flight to the summer-
land,
I long to sail with your merry crew;
My caged heart flutters beneath my
hand
To try its wings in the upper blue.

But I have no chart of your sun-lit
shores;

And my heart is heavy, it cannot fly.

Dip, dip, dip with your velvet oars;

Happier travellers you than I !

IF I COULD CHOOSE.

 WOULD not dare, though it
 . were offered me,
To plan my lot for but a sin-
 gle day,

So sure am I that all my life would be
 Marked with a blot in token of my
 sway.

But were it granted me this day to
 choose

One shining bead from the world's
 jewelled string,

Favor and fortune I would quick refuse
 To grasp a richer and more costly
 thing.

With this brave talisman upon my breast,
 I could be ruler of my rebel soul;
To own this gem is to command the rest:
 It is the Kohinoor called Self-Control!

It is the *sesame* to broad estates,
To peaceful slopes and mountains
blue and fair;
Calm-browed Content beyond its border
waits,
And even Love sits in the sunshine
there.

No sullen faces frown upon the street,
No grated windows, no grim prison
walls;
No clanking chains are bound on con-
vict's feet,
And on the ear no angry discord
falls.

My life's swift river widens to the
sea,
The careless babble of the brook is
past;
A few late roses blossom still for me,
But spring is gone, and summer can-
not last.

Had I begun with morning's rosy strength
To seek the flower that on life's summit grows,
I might have found my edelweis at length,
And on the purple heights have gained repose.

Put I have loitered, and the hour is late ;
Worn are my feet, and weary is my hand ;
I can but push ajar the massive gate ;
I can but look into the Beulah land.

But, friends, if my poor love could have its way,
And blossom into blessing on each soul,
This is the very prayer that I should pray :
“ Grant to men's lives the power of self-control ! ”

GOOD-BY.

 O-MORROW night, when the
 flush has fled
 From the beautiful face of day,
 And other lovers with clinging hands
 Under my lattices stray;
 I shall sit in the dusk alone,
 And you will be far away.

Perhaps we never shall meet again
 Till our burdens have been laid down,
 And we have passed through the grave's
 dark aisle,
 With its ceilings so low and brown,
 Into the warmth of the Father's smile,
 Or the shadow of his frown.

And should I reach the end of the road
Before your journey is done,
I will lean and listen beside the gate
For the travellers, one by one ;
And when I have heard your foot-fall,
 love,
 My heaven will have begun !

“MY CUP RUNNETH OVER.”

UST for to-day may I not sing
For gratitude alone,
Nor interrupt my praise to
bring
Petitions to the throne?

Just for to-day may I not eat
From yesterday's full store?
While gathered manna still is sweet,
Shall I entreat for more?

And yet, dear Lord, I cannot live
One hour without thy care;
So in the cup of thanks I give
Petition, too, must share.

I am too ignorant to name
The blessings best for me;
The wisest prayer my lips can frame
Is simpleness to thee.

Yet take, O God, and Friend of
friends,
My chalice, poor and rude,
Wherein one strong petition blends,—
Give me more gratitude!

IN EXTREMIS.

HILE children lean their cheeks
in drowsy prayer
Against their mother's knees,
and all the air
Is sweet with vesper bell;
See the spent day against the sunset
stand,
Her smouldering torch down-drooping
from her hand
In token of farewell.

With vague regret I watch each ebbing
grace.
Come, twilight, gentle nun, before her
face

Shall cold and ashen be;
Fold thy gray veil above her as she lies,
And sprinkle her with incense from
thine eyes:
She hath been kind to me.

MELANCHOLY DAYS.

 HE vine upon the old church-
 wall
 Has dropped its scarlet gown,
 And stands, a discrowned cardinal,
 In a monk's garb of brown.

Along each maple-bordered lane,
 Which Autumn late has trod,
 Her wounded feet have left a stain
 On every leaf and sod.

And here, where its own spicy scent
 Its hiding has betrayed,
 Safe from the frost within the tent
 Some tattered leaves have made,

Is one belated pink as pale
As some meek convent nun,
Whose color fades behind her veil
For want of wind and sun.

The golden-rod, a spendthrift gay,
Who poured for asking hands
Palms-full of gold, himself to-day
Rusty and ragged stands !

And now, like doves with cold, gray
breasts,
The snow-flakes flutter by,
And brood within the empty nests
Where young birds used to lie.

Oh, who would guess that skies so cold
Hold in their cloaks of gray
The perfect blue and radiant gold
Of Spring's delicious May?

SNOWFLAKES.

N their errand of purity softly
they go,
A million fair doves from the
clouds swooping low!

They light in my window, and brood on
my sill,
With milky-white pinions down-folded
and still.

They tenderly flutter through by-way
and street,
And fold their wings over each stain
that they meet;
Until all the hedges, so ragged and
bare,
Seem dressed for a bridal resplendent
and fair.

Our little brown cottage is battered and worn,
Its hinges are rusty, its shutters are torn;
But this morning the raggedest roof in the town
Is shingled all over with feathers of down!

O doves, as you light upon meadow and plain
I wish you could cover man's weakness and stain!
Yes, I wish and I wish that the fast-falling snow
Could brood with its pinions our faults here below!

THE RAIN.

 HE brooks leaped up to catch it,
 And the breezes held their
 breath;

The lilies sprang up boldly,
 And shook their heads at death.

The roses blushed to crimson
 At the kisses of the rain;

And the sun looked out and saw it
 With a flush of jealous pain.

The thirsty little river,
 Through the faded grass that led,
 Began to flash and sparkle
 Like a chain of silver thread.
 It tinkled through the meadow
 Where the unraked clover lay,
 Lifting its rosy blossoms,
 As the rain-king passed that way.

It left its fragrant blessing
 Along the dingy street;
It cooled the heated pavement
 For the tread of tired feet;
It stole within the chamber
 Where a sick one longed for death,
And filled the slender nostrils
 With its life-giving breath.

Upon the fluttering pulses
 It laid a wondrous calm,
And on the quivering eyelids
 It poured a slumberous balm.
It drew from the hot forehead
 The burning darts of pain,
And tired watchers slumbered,
 Lulled by its soft refrain.

A POMPEIAN PREACHER.

EAR, dainty little "Maiden
Hair,"
Whose slender figure, trim
and fair,
Apparelled in the softest green,
Seems fit for court of faerie queen,

I marvel much that without fear
Your tender life finds shelter here,
Where silence, death, and grim decay
Stalk like pale phantoms day by day !

No little child with dancing feet
Embroiders, by its presence sweet,
A thread of grace within the gloom
That curtains every silent room.

The sunshine, with its soft, warm feet,
Shrinks back from the unfriendly street,
And God's free light steals through the
doors,
And shivers on the marble floors.

The timid lizard noiseless glides,
The slothful snail in calm abides;
But nothing that is fresh or fair
Dwells here save thee, dear " Maiden
Hair!"

The place where thou dost choose to be
Was once a hall of equity;
A court, where Justice, stern and cold,
Untouched by Mercy, ruled of old.

Too delicate art thou, and fair,
To dwell in such a chilling air;
And yet, within these ruins gray,
Thou livest thy perfect life to-day.

Thou art a preacher, sweet and good,
And this low niche where thou hast
stood,

Thy pulpit, from whose tiny walls
A sermon, quaint and earnest, falls.

O patient lives that sunless are,
From whom bright fortune stands afar!
Ye came not to your present state
By any careless chance; but Fate,

Whose name is God, hath planned it so,
With kinder forethought than we know!
And if athwart thy web of gray,
Thou runnest no brightness day by day,

Be sure thou hast not wrought so well
As this shy flower, whose name I tell,—
This dweller in Pompeian air,—
My little preacher, “Maiden Hair!”

EXPIATION.

 DEATH ! we call thee tyrant
in our blindness,
And yet thou shovest us full
gentle ways ;
And teachest far more charity and kind-
ness
Than the gay flatterer, Life, whom
most we praise !

The sword which we had bared for
angry smiting
Thou hidest in a sheath of flowers, O
Death !
And wrongs we fancied needed stern
requiting
Fade out like morning mists at thy
chaste breath.

Before some vanished friend we swing
our censer,
And burn our candles at her empty
shrine;
As if for past neglect to recompense
her,
Or memory to drug with perfumes
fine.

We wound the living heart, yet clip the
briers
From roses that we lay in pulseless
hands;
We build for frozen hearts our tardy
fires,
And pour love's chalice upon grave-
yard sands.

'T was ever thus. Men scourged the
living Saviour,
And plaited thorns among His holy
hair;

Then sought to expiate their mad behavior
By climbing on their knees some sacred stair.

Life hath one path to heights of expiation,
Where souls stung by remorse may gather balm;
But by no single bound or swift translation
May eager pilgrims reach their purple calm.

The debt thou owest the dead, pay to the living;
For every guilt-spot on thy memory
Drop into some sad hand that needs thy giving
A shining bead from love's rich rosary.

Haste, if the debt be thine, for time is
pressing!

Soon must the beads upon thy thread
be spent,

And thou set down thy cup of dole and
blessing

To pass within the curtain of Death's
tent.

WHAT WILL IT MATTER?

 HAT will it matter in a little
while
That for a day
We met and gave a word, a touch, a
smile,
Upon the way?

What will it matter whether hearts were
brave,
And lives were true;
That you gave me the sympathy I
crave,
As I gave you?

These trifles,— can it be they make or
mar
A human life?
Are souls as lightly swayed as rushes
are,
By love, or strife?

Yea, yea! a look the fainting heart may
break,
Or make it whole:
And just one word, if said for love's
sweet sake,
May save a soul!

YOUR BIRTHDAY.

 HIS is the day my friend was
born to me!"

I cried this morning with a
thrill and start;
"O birthday bells, ring out right merrily,
And hang your banners out, my
happy heart!"

It matters not what the storm-signals
say,—

It is fair weather in my soul to-day!"

Not like all other days is this, O friend,
And I would make some grateful,
glad ado;

What signal message can I straightway
send

To prove I consecrate the hours to
you?

I would salute each silent, shadowy
mast
Of your good years as they go sailing
past.

What have they brought to you, these
phantom ships?

Some silver dust, to sprinkle on the
hair?

A faded rose, to lay upon the lips?

Some shining tears? A green grave
here and there?

A jagged cross? A tired brain and
heart?

Ah, friend, are these of thy rich freight
a part?

Or are they pirate ships whose dark
offence

Is stealing from us youth so fair and
good?

The “sweet first time” of glad expe-
rience

Of hope, and dewy love, and parent-hood?

Is it for this their misty sails unfurl,
Just to make plunder of our gold and pearl?

Nay, nay! if so, more fit were funeral knells

And wreaths of cypress,—one for each dead year,—

Than the sweet jangle of the joyous bells,

The glad “God bless you!” and the birthday cheer.

God guides the years, and freights them as is best;

Let us have patience till we know the rest.

Ah, how like little children we are led
Up to the threshold of the future years,

To every waiting sorrow blindfolded,

And all unconscious of to-morrow's
tears!

And when to-morrow comes, we find it
still
Holds just the strength sufficient for
its ill!

O gentle Trust! if to possess thy grace
Needed long journeys to some ancient
shrine,

Though faint and weary, we would seek
the place

From rosy dawn till midnight stars
should shine!

But they who find thy presence know
full well

That in no far-off country dost thou
dwell.

Oh, what can not her gentle presence
do?

It is a flower upon sick pillows
thrown;

The rose that hides the rankling thorn
from view;

The velvet moss upon old towers
grown.

It is a box of ointment rare and sweet,
Which we may break upon the Holy
feet.

And now, dear friend, I think you
understand,

That if to-day some happy prayer of
mine

Could bring a white gift fluttering to
your hand,

I would not ask for things that flash
and shine,—

But that upon your threshold God
might lay

This flower of trust to crown your
natal day.

EASTER DAY.



SAD, sad soul, fling wide your
doors,
And make your windows cur-
tainless;

Strew odours on your silent floors,
And all your walls with lilies dress !

Throw open every sombre place;
Roll every hindering stone away;
Let Easter sunshine gild your face,
And bless you with its warmth to-day !

Let friends renew each bygone hour;
Let children fling the world a kiss;
And every hand tie in some flower,
To crown a day so good as this !

And whether skies are sad or clear,
We'll give the day to joy and song;
For since the Christ is surely here,
All things are right, and naught is
wrong!

O BELLS IN THE STEEPLE.



BELLS in the steeple,
Ring out to all people
That Christ has arisen,—that
Jesus is here !
Touch heaven's blue ceiling
With your happy pealing ;
O bells in the steeple, ring out full and
clear !

O soft April showers,
Call out the young flowers,
Touch each little sleeper, and bid her
obey ;
Set daffodils blowing,
And fresh grasses growing,
To thrill the old world on this new
Easter-day !

O lilies so stately,—
Like maids tall and shapely,—
Christ loved you, and talked of your
beauty of old;
Stand up in your places,
And bend your white faces,
While swinging before Him your censers
of gold!

O violets tender,
Your shy tribute render !
Tie round your wet faces your soft
hoods of blue;
And carry your sweetness,
Your dainty completeness,
To some tired hand that is longing
for you.

O velvet-bloomed willows,
Go comfort sick pillows
With visions of meadow-lands, peace-
ful and brown !

The breath of Spring lingers
Within your cold fingers,
And the brook's song is caught in your
fringes of down.

O world, bowed and broken
With anguish unspoken,
Take heart and be glad, for the Lord is
not dead !
On some bright to-morrow,
Your black cloud of sorrow
Will break in a sweet rain of joy on
your head.

O bells in the steeple,
Ring out to all people
That Christ has arisen,— that Jesus is
here !
Touch heaven's blue ceiling
With your happy pealing ;
O bells in the steeple, ring out full and
clear !

IN SILENCE.

 S loving friends sit sometimes
hand in hand,
Nor mar with sound the sweet
speech of their eyes;
So in soft silence let us oftener kneel,
Nor try with words to make God
understand.
Longing is prayer; upon its wings we
rise
To where the airs of heaven around
us steal.

MY MOTHER.

*The sweetest face in all the world to me,
Set in a frame of shining silver hair,
With eyes whose language is fidelity :
This is my mother. Is she not most fair ?*

*Ten little heads have found their sweetest rest
Upon the pillow of her loving breast :
The world is wide ; yet nowhere does it keep
So safe a haven, so secure a rest.*

*'Tis counted something great to be a queen,
And bend a kingdom to a woman's will.
To be a mother such as mine, I ween,
Is something better and more noble still.*

*O mother ! in the changeful years now flown,
Since, as a child, I leaned upon your knee,
Life has not brought to me, nor fortune shown,
Such tender love ! such yearning sympathy !*

*Let fortune smile or frown, whiche'er she will ;
It matters not, I scorn her fickle ways !
I never shall be quite bereft until
I lose my mother's honest blame and praise !*

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SHE CAME TO ME.

OT with the rustle of strange wings,
Not as an angel garmented;
No aureole shone round her head,
She did not speak of heavenly things.

She came and stood beside my knee,
Leaning upon it as of old;
Until my sorrow, fold on fold,
Like an old garment fell from me.

The very frock she used to wear,
The lace about her sweet, round wrist;
The warm moist hand that I had kissed;
The wayward trick of the bright hair.

That on her lifted forehead fell, —
I saw it all in rapt surprise,
As smiling upward with her eyes
She said, “ I ’m all well now — all well.”

O little queen, whose realm on earth
In ruin lies ! leave not the road
Between thy world and ours untrod ;
Come sometimes back to the old hearth !

We will not bar the chamber door,
To hinder thy departing feet :
We know thou canst not tarry, Sweet,
But come, O come to us once more !

THE BABY OVER THE WAY.



CROSS in my neighbor's window,
With its folds of satin and lace,
I see, with its crown of ringlets,
A baby's innocent face.

The throng in the street look upward,
And every one, grave or gay,
Has a nod and a smile for the baby,
In the mansion over the way.

Just here in my cottage window,
His chin in his dimpled hands,
And a patch on his faded apron,
The child that I live for stands.
He has kept my heart from breaking
For many a weary day;
And his face is as pure and handsome
As the baby's over the way.

Sometimes, when we sit together,
 My grave little man of three,
Sore vexes me with the question,
 “Does God up in Heaven like me?”
And I say, “Yes, yes, my darling,”
 Though I almost answer “Nay”:
As I see the nursery candles,
 In the mansion over the way.

And oft when I draw the stocking
 From his little tired feet,
And loosen the clumsy garments
 From his limbs so round and sweet,
I grow too bitter for singing,
 My heart too heavy to pray,
As I think of the dainty raiment
 Of the baby over the way.

• • • • •

Oh God in Heaven forgive me
 For all I have thought and said!
My envious heart is humbled:
 My neighbor’s baby is dead!

I saw the little white coffin
As they carried it out to-day,
And the heart of a mother's is breaking
In the mansion over the way!

The light is fair in my window,
The flowers bloom at my door;
My boy is chasing the sunbeams
That dance on the cottage floor.
The roses of health are crowning
My darling's forehead to-day;
But the baby is gone from the window
Of the mansion over the way!

FOUR. •



H, wind of the sweet May morning !
 Tell me the rarest thing,
 The fittest for birthday token,
 That your rosy hands can bring.
Oh, army of loving mothers,
 Lend me your counsel, pray,
 And tell me a gift for a darling
 Who is four years old to-day !

I have hunted the clover meadow
 And the blossoming orchards through
For a bit of the robin's crimson,
 Or the jay-bird's dainty blue ;
But robin, at home with her babies,
 Was having a holiday,
And when I made love to the blue-bird,
 She whistled and fluttered away.

ELIZABETH.



CANNOT tell
How it befell
As you came sailing straight
to me,
That no sweet hail,
Nor rustling sail
Proclaimed my coming argosy.

Yet every day
Upon its way
Your boat was speeding sure and fast;
Until my eyes
With glad surprise
Beheld and welcomed you at last.

I cannot see
How it could be
I saw no signal from your hand;
Yet this I know,
With happy glow,
Your boat to-day is at my strand.

A LITTLE PILLOW.

 LITTLE pillow, do you think,
With your frills and bows of pink,
You can faithful be and true,
To the trust I give to you?
In your laces, here and there,
I have stitched a silent prayer
For the little child, whose face
Soon will give a needed grace
To the work my hands have wrought
With full many a tender thought.

Underneath each knot of pink
Hides a sleepy elf, I think,
Who, with tricks so sly and wise,
Fastens down the baby's eyes;
Wraps him round from brow to feet
With a rest so soft and sweet,

That he cries in grieved surprise,
When he opens wide his eyes,
Just because he cannot keep
All the treasures of his sleep !

To each feather soft and white
I have whispered dreams so light,
That the baby's sleep will be
Full of peace and purity.
What though velvet cheek and lips,
With their rosiness eclipse
Every touch of puny skill,
I have wrought with loving will?

How could anything compare
With a baby fresh and fair?
How could God's work pure and fine ;
Ever harmonize with mine ?
Little pillow do you think,
With your frills and bows of pink
You can faithful be and true
To the trust I give to you ?

“LOST—A GIRL.”

 H, say ! have you seen my Alice
 Anywhere on Life's street,
 Among the army of children
 Everywhere that you meet?
 Her hair was in yellow tangles,
 There were prints of sweets on her face,
 She spoke in a broken language,
 And lisped with a child's rare grace.

Has nobody seen this hoyden,
 This queer little girl in blue,
 With a rent in her wee white apron
 And a gap in each scarlet shoe?
 Her shoe-strings were always dangling,
 And her stockings sure to be
 Loosed and showing the dimples
 Set in each rosy knee.

If angels had stolen our Alice —
 Away from her life of play;
If under a cover of daisies
 We had hidden our girl away;
If I could know she had wandered
 The Heavenly gateway through,
I should think some day to find her,
 My little daughter in blue.

The birds have learned to answer
 When her name I sadly call,
But the voice of my little truant
 Is silent, in room and hall.
I see a beautiful *woman*
 With my grandchild at her knee,
But my little heedless Alice
 Will never come back to me!

MY BABY'S MOUTH.



HE had not compassed much of
human speech
With that small mouth, like two
rose-petals curled;
But the short octave that her tongue could
reach,
Out-sweetened all the music in the world.

Yet when my child was with me every day,
I wore her heedlessly upon my breast,—
My tender flower! — It is our human
way;
We mothers are too thoughtless at the
best.

For had some angel stooped from heaven
to touch
With that same tenderness my brow
and hair,

I should have thrilled and trembled over-much,
And set some consecrated signet there.

I seal it now, God and the angels know !
And on the strength of every slighted kiss
I will drink humbly my full cup of woe,
Nor grudge the price for my neglected bliss.

O world, you nothing hold that I regret :
I covet neither honors, wealth, nor place ;
I want my baby's mouth all sweet and wet,
Rubbing its dew against my lonely face !

NESTS.



KNOW where meadow-grasses
rank and high
A cradle cover,
Because two bobolinks with tell-tale cry
Above them hover.

Some mullein leaves beside my garden
wall
Grow unmolested;
And under their pale velvet parasol
Sparrows have nested.

An oriole toiled on from day to day—
The cunning weaver! —
Tying her hammock to that leafy spray
Above the river.

No wingless thief can climb that elm's frail
stair;

Nor guest unbidden
Can reach the snug, aerial chamber where
Her eggs are hidden.

A marsh-wren's cunning hermitage I see,
As my boat passes,
Moored to the green stems of a *fleur-de-lis*
With strong sea grasses.

And stay! I know another pretty nest
Of braided willow,
With dainty lace, and knots of ribbon
drest,
And feather pillow.

And just one bird, with moist and downy
head,
Herein reposes;
He has no wings, — his shoulders grow
instead
Dimples and roses!

You have a nest and little wingless bird
• At your house, may be;
Of course you know without another
word
I mean — a baby!

THE CHILD THAT BELONGS TO ME.

 O pure is my child, that I dare to
 say
 His Maker would not despise
 To color the sky on some rare June day
 From the blue in his handsome eyes;
 And I am as proud as mother can be
 Of this beautiful boy that belongs to me!

Sometimes when we walk where the lily
 blows,
 She frowns with a sullen grace;
 The gentle violet jealous grows
 When my little one breathes in her
 face;
 And even the rose bends courteously
 To the beautiful boy that belongs to me.

His voice is as clear and sweet as the bell
 That swings in the robin's throat;
I have asked him oft, but he cannot tell
 Wherever he caught its note;
And where is the bird more happy and
 free
Than the beautiful boy that belongs to
 me!

Whenever I go to the market-place
 I carry him proud and high,
That all may catch a glimpse of his face
 Before we have passed them by;
So eager am I that the world shall see
 This beautiful boy that belongs to me!

They tell me the world is a dreary place,
 And heavily sown with tears;
But when I look in my child's dear face,
 My heart is too glad for fears;
And all I can give seems a worthless fee
 For the beautiful boy that belongs to me.

Nor will I burden my days with sighs,
Lest God for my child should send;
For whether he lives or whether he dies,
He is mine till Eternity's end.
And I fear no harm to my child or me,
Since both, O Father, belong to Thee!

IN THE DOOR.



OR forty years this old gray sentinel
Has braved the tempest and the driving rain;
For forty years its rusty hinge has creaked
To let the sunshine in and out again.

The little hands that reached to clasp the latch
Are clean enough to-day, the angels know;
For they were emptied of the toys of life,
And folded passively long years ago.

I brush away the cobwebs and the dust,
And sit me down upon the sunken sill;
And through the gate and up the garden walk,
I seem to see my children trooping still.

Their merry voices cheer my lonesome
ear;
Their little garments brush me as they
pass;
And all along the path their feet have
come
A trail of sunshine parts the bended
grass.

I am no longer tired, worn, and gray;
My children cling about me as of yore;
And with their hands clasped tightly in
my own,
We watch the sunset from the open
door.

TIRED MOTHERS.



LITTLE elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee, that has so much to bear;
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly
From underneath a thatch of shining hair:
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch
Of warm, moist fingers, folding yours so tight,
You do not prize this blessing overmuch—
You almost are too tired to pray,
to-night!

But it *is* blessedness! A year ago
I did not see it as I do to-day,
We are so dull and thankless; and too slow
To catch the sunshine e'er it slips away.

And now it seems surpassing strange to me,
That while I wore the badge of mother-
hood,

I did not kiss more oft and tenderly
The little child that brought me only
good!

And if some night when you sit down to
rest,

You miss this elbow from your tired
knee;

This restless, curling head from off your
breast,

This lisping tongue that chatters
constantly;

If from your own the dimpled hand had
slipped,

And ne'er would nestle in your palm
again;

If the white feet into their grave had
tripped,

I could not blame you for your heart-
ache then!

I wonder so that mothers ever fret
At little children, clinging to their gown ;
Or that the footprints, when the days are
wet,
Are ever black enough to make them
frown !

If I could find a little muddy boot,
Or cap, or jacket, on my chamber floor ;
If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,
And hear its music in my home once
more ;

If I could mend a broken cart to-day,
To-morrow make a kite to reach the sky,
There is no woman in God's world could
say
She was more blissfully content than I.
But, ah ! the dainty pillow next my own
Is never rumpled by a shining head ;
My singing birdling from its nest is flown :
The little boy I used to kiss is dead !

THE SANTA CLAUS STORY.



HOW sweet it all was! The red
firelight,
The cat purring soft on the rug,
The wife flitting backwards and forwards,
The egg-nog afoam in the mug.
And when I looked up at the starlight,
And down at this picture so fair,
I just dropped my head, and in silence
Gave thanks to the Giver right there.

The parson came in, and we told him
How happy our boy Fritz was,
A-hanging his little gray stocking,
And prattling about Santa Claus.
And how Alice said as she kissed me,
A-reaching my neck on tip-toe:
“I tould n’t hold any more gladness,
Dear papa, unless I should drow.”

But the parson sat gloomy and solemn,
And wife looked just ready to cry
When he said, "Is it right, my good
brother,
To tell them that old-fashioned lie?
You can't expect roses and lilies
In a garden where thistles are sown,
Nor truth from the lips of your children,
If you let falsehood blacken your
own."

Then he said "Merry Christmas," and
left us,
That dazed, and so kind of unstrung,
That we stared at those little gray
stockings,
Till the bells in the church steeple
rung.
And their chimes took me back to my
mother,
And I stood a wee chap at her knee,
And heard the same Santa Claus story
That Mary and Fritz have, from me.

And if the Lord reckons it sinful
I hope He will punish it light:
Just think what a world full of sinners
Have told that old story to-night!

COMPENSATION.

HE folded up the worn and
mended frock
And smoothed it tenderly upon
her knee,
Then through the soft web of a wee red
sock
She wove the bright wool, musing
thoughtfully,
“Can this be all? The great world is so fair,
I hunger for its green and pleasant ways;
A cripple prisoned in her restless chair,
Looks from her window with a wistful
gaze.
“The fruits I cannot reach are red and
sweet,
The paths forbidden are both green and
wide;

O God! there is no boon to helpless feet
So altogether sweet as paths denied.
Home is most fair: bright are my
household fires,
And children are a gift without alloy:
But who would bound the field of her
desires
By the prim hedges of mere fireside
joy?

“I can but weave a faint thread to and
fro,
Making a frail woof in a baby’s sock;
Into the world’s sweet tumult I would go,
At its strong gates my trembling hand
would knock.”
Just then the children came, the father
too,
Their eager faces lit the twilight gloom,
“Dear heart,” he whispered, as he nearer
drew,
“How sweet it is within this little
room!

“God puts my strongest comfort here to draw

When thirst is great, and common wells are dry.

Your pure desire is my unerring law;

Tell me, dear one, who is so safe as I?

Home is the pasture where my soul may feed,

This room a paradise has grown to be,
And only where these patient feet shall lead

Can it be home for these dear ones and me.”

He touched with reverent hand the helpless feet,

The children crowded close and kissed her hair.

“Our mother is so good, and kind, and sweet,

There’s not another like her anywhere ! ”

The baby in her low bed opened wide

The soft blue flowers of her timid eyes,

And viewed the group about the cradle
side
With smiles of glad and innocent
surprise.

The mother drew the baby to her breast
And smiling said: "The stars shine
soft to-night;
My world is fair; its hedges, too, are best
And whatsoever is, dear Lord, is right."

TWO VALENTINES.

NE was the loveliest thing! A
pink sachet
Trimmed with soft ribbons and
point appliqué,
While heliotropes upon their rosy field
The daintiest of perfumes seemed to
yield.

Tom thought it just the thing, and then he
knew
The nicest girl in town would think so
too;
And, best of all, within the folds was laid
A valentine to please the little maid:

“What is daintier, can you tell,
Than the lichen groves where the fairies
dwell?

What is a still more delicate thing
Than the silken stuff of a butterfly's
wing?

What has a lining do you think
As fair as the mushroom's fluted pink?

"Are you so dull? Why, the rarest
thing
Is the heart of the girl whose praise I
sing!"

This he addressed to Miss Maude Alice
Browne.

Another — how I blush to write it down —
He sent in spite to poor lame Meg
McCray,

Who won the prize in algebra that day.

"There is a young person I know,
Whose shoes are all out at the toe ;
She has very large feet,
Her gown is not neat,
And her petticoats hang down below.

“I *may* ride a broom to the sky,
A snow-storm *may* fall in July,
And my slatternly friend
Her habits *may* mend ;
But do you believe it? Not I.”

But can you tell me how it came about
That Miss Maude Alice Browne, with
 laugh and shout,
Received Meg’s valentine? And, strange
 to tell,
Miss Meg McCray received Miss Browne’s
 as well.

“O Tom!” Meg cried with innocent,
 round eyes,
“I’ve had the dearest kind of a sur-
 prise!
Now who could love a poor, lame girl
 like me
Enough to send this valentine? Just
 see!

“If I were rich like Miss Maude Alice Browne,
And pretty, too— Why, Tom, what makes you frown?—
It could not be so sweet to me, you know,
To feel that some kind person loves me so.

“But now whenever things seem hard to bear,
I think it will be easier not to care,
And being lame will not seem quite so bad,
The thought that some one cares makes me so glad.

Tom looked perplexed. What could the fellow do
But say, “ Well, Meg, I ’m just as glad as you ! ”
And so he was: the jealous fiend had flown
And in his eyes a true repentance shone.

And Miss Maude Alice Brown cried with
a laugh,

“ Some one has sent me my own photo-
graph !

Well it’s a joke, and here’s the best of it,
It does n’t hurt because it does n’t hit ! ”

That night Tom’s sister touched him on
the knee :

“ I say, dear Tom,” she said michievously,
“ I wonder if the Lord will credit you
With what you *did*, or what you *meant* to
do.”

JOE'S MERCIES.

Well, I 've been counting my mercies,
As my grandmother would say,
And I have n't got many to brag of,
If it is Thanksgiving Day.

There 's mother, of course, and the baby,
They 're down in big letters, you know,
But between you and me, the remainder
Don't make an exceeding long row.

For grandma is very uncertain,
And likely as not, before long,
To quietly slip off and leave us —
She is seventy, and not very strong.

And I would n't give a brass button
For a palace, no matter how fine,
That has n't a grandmother in it
That looks pretty nearly like mine.

And then, you will own, it's a trial,
To be so exceedingly poor;
It takes just a few extra mercies
To make up for that, I am sure.

To-day, we'll have beef and rice pudding,
Thanksgiving at that. What a feast!
One ought to expect a plump turkey
And cranberry sauce, at least.

And you can't guess how lonesome it is
Jack,
For a shaver no bigger than I,
To manage without any father,
And I hope that you won't have to try.

And the more I try to be thankful
And think of my blessings and such;
The more it appears, on that subject,
What I have to say is not much.

And as for the weather — it's horrid!
Just look at the frost on the glass!
Why, I could n't catch sight of a circus
If one should happen to pass.

Say, Jacky just come to the window;
What is it on Benny Bright's door?
It's a strip of white crape and a ribbon!
O Jack, had you seen it before?

And there goes a little white coffin
And flowers. Yes, Jack, now I see!
It is Ben's little rosy-faced brother,
Who always threw kisses at me.

Oh, I am the worst of boys, Jacky,
Don't any one dare tell me "No,"
I tell you I'll whip the first fellow
That offers to say it ain't so.

But, Jack, it never once struck me
Till I saw that small coffin, to-day,
How much a little round baby,
Like the one at our house, can weigh.

But I say, if in counting his mercies
A boy is inclined to be slow,
A hearse at the door of his neighbor
Will quicken his senses, I know.

At any rate that's my opinion ;
And I think, if the Lord does n't care,
I 'll reckon my mercies all over ;
For, Jacky, I didn't count fair.

MY LITTLE BOY.

HE old square clock had struck
the hour of eight.

Outside the starry lamps were
shining high,

The silver moon in regal splendor sate
In the blue glory of the Christmas sky,
And tired workers toiling homeward late
Hummed Christmas carols as they
plodded by.

My little boy was standing by my chair,
One small white foot was bare upon the
floor;

His shining eyes beheld a world all fair;
His face was eloquent with hopes in
store,

For hanging in the chimney corner there
Was the small fleecy sock my darling
wore.

He had been telling me in eager speech
Of all the treasures Santa Claus would
bring;
There were no bounds his sweet faith
could not reach,
His trust was simple and unquestion-
ing,
While I had learned the whole that life
could teach
Of bitter doubt and cruel suffering!

I listened to him with a wistful prayer,
I longed to make some helpful faith my
own;
That into my poor life of grief and
care
Might creep a truer grace than it had
known—
Some blessed trust that would not prove a
snare,
Some love more honest than the world
had shown.

And then I said, "The Christmas is to me
More sad, my boy, than you can
understand;

It brings me gifts of pain and treachery,
And deals them through a loved and
trusted hand.

It brings a broken truth my staff to be,
And leaves me nothing that will hold or
stand!

My blessed child broke in upon my woe,
Half loving, half reproachfully he said,
"You still have something left; there's
me, you know!"

Why, one might think your little boy
was dead!

I'm little now, but when I larger grow
I will take care of you, mamma," he
said.

I caught him with a passionate surprise;
I covered him with kisses burning
sweet!

My life grew richer, looking in his eyes,
Though other loves were poor and
incomplete;
And praying God to make him good and
wise,
I tucked the cover soft about his feet.

WHAT CAN I DO?



HAT can I do, O heavy heart
within,
That shall atone
For this most sacrilegious sin
That I have done?

For when my soul would seek the King
alone
A round bright head
Lifts up its aureole before the throne
And shines instead.

Nor gates of pearl, nor walls of amethyst
That flash and glow,
Have grace and color like the eyes I
kissed
A year ago.

And Christ forgive me! All the bliss and
balm
Of that rare land
Are held, for me, within the slender palm
Of one small hand!

One day my soul may climb on holier
round
To Heaven's fair place:
But now, ah me! my fierce desire is
bound
By one sweet face.

WHO HATH MADE THEM TO DIFFER.



HO hath made them to differ —
Your little child and mine?
Each with a face like the flower,
Each with the stamp divine !
Who hath made them to differ —
The lamb in the sheltering fold,
And the waif with never a pasture,
Bleating for hunger and cold?

Is it God that wrought the evil?
Does He fashion the tender flower
Only to trample its chalice
Under the tread of His power?
Is it God, the Father of Mercies,
The Blameless, the Undefiled,
Who hath wrought this pitiful evil
In the life of a little child?

Hath He erred somehow like a mortal,
That the children cry for bread?
Is it God hath failed in His weaving
And twisted and soiled the thread?
Nay, nay, He is just, and our Father,
He cannot beget a wrong!
We clash the keys of His organ
And then blame Him for the song.

We thrust our hands in His purpose,
And tangle them in His wheel,
And then cry out like children,
For the hurt we needs must feel.
We shatter our cup of blessing,
Its portion we waste or spill,
And then complain and wonder
That the poor are hungry still.

When wast Thou sick, O Saviour!
And I ministered not to Thee?
“ If thou didst it not to my brother
Thou didst it not unto me.”

Then haste while the pool is troubled!
Haste in the name of Him!
And lift with the clasp of a mother
Some sufferer over the brim!

PAPA'S BIRTHDAY.



HAT *is* a birthday, papa?
Is it something nice for you?
Are they good for little fellows?
And can *I* have one, too?
This world is full of puzzles
To bother boys about;
But it's a pretty hard one
My papa can't make out.

Mamma says love is fairest
Of all the gifts we bring;
A *very* great deal sweeter
Than any other thing.
Then, if there's nothing better,
And mamma tells me true,
Oh, take it for your birthday
From your little boy to you !

THE LOST CHRISTMAS.

“Seek ye first the King.”

HE Russian peasants tell to-day
A legend old and dear to them,
How, when the wise men went
their way
To find the Babe at Bethlehem,

They paused to let their camels rest
Beside a peasant's lowly door;
And all intent upon their quest
They talked their sacred errand o'er.

“Come with us,” said the eager three;
“Come, seek with us the heavenly Child;
What prouder honor can there be
For mortals, sinful and defiled?

“And bid each child in Sunday clothes
Bring of his treasures the most rare,
Bundles of myrrh and whitest doves,
With ointment for the Christ-King’s
hair.

“Who knows what blessing may befall
If they but touch His garment’s hem?
And only once for them and all
Will Christ be born at Bethlehem !”

“Alas ! My task must first be done,”
The mother answered with a sigh ;
“But I would see the holy one,
And I will follow by and by.”

The wise men frowned and onward went,
Leaving the children all aglow,
And pleading till the day was spent,
“When may we go? When may we
go ?”

And while their cheeks flushed rosy red,
They shouted in a chorus sweet:
“And may we touch His pretty head?
And may we kiss His blessed feet?”

But women still will brew and bake,
No matter what sweet honors wait;
And petty tasks they undertake,
Though angels tarry at the gate!

And when all things were in their place,
And every child was neat and trim;
When each tear-stained and tired face
Was bathed and tied its hood within;

The sky was purpling in the west,
The silent night was hurrying on;
The three wise men had onward pressed,
The star from out the east had gone!

What could the foolish mother do?
She turned her footsteps home again;
And never, all her sad life through,
Did she behold the three wise men.

And thus through weak delaying she
Her sweetest privilege had missed ;
Nor ever did her children see
The Holy Babe they might have kissed.

A SWEET OLD LEGEND.

RING that low footstool from the
corner, Ted;
Mary and Jack you cannot crowd
too near;
While baby Bess will curl her pretty
head
Against my heart, that holds you all so
dear.

Now for the legend. Once, long years
ago,
When in our world the blessed Lord
was seen,
He walked one evening, tired, sad, and
slow,
With His disciples through the meadows
green.

Why was He sad? Dear child, I cannot
say

What burdens pressed upon His heart
divine—

Perhaps none had believed on Him that
day;

Perhaps He thought upon your sins
and mine.

Along the way the sweet field lilies grew
In rich apparel, finer than a king's;
Above His head the twittering sparrows
flew—

(He drew His sermons from these
simple things).

Now as they walked on holy thoughts
intent,

Upon the path a poor dead dog they
spied:

One spurned him with his foot as on he
went,

And "What an ugly beast," another cried.

But in their Master's eyes compassion
shone;

He stooped and touched the creature's
shaggy head,

"At least, my dear disciples, you will own
His teeth are white as pearls," He
gently said.

Then they passed on. Dears, is it strange
to you

That mothers with their babies round
Him pressed?

That Peter learned to be so good and
true,

And John leaned close upon His loving
breast?

PLOUGHED UNDER.

 T grieves me much, the homes
 that I have spoiled,
 Of nest and burrow;
As in my barley-field to-day I toiled,
 Ploughing the furrow.

Armies of ants that grain by grain had
 laid
 Their snug embankment,
Were overwhelmed by my unhappy
 raid —
 Fort and encampment.

The silver ropes a cunning gymnast spun
 Met such disaster
That a wise fly who watched the spider
 run,
 Buzzed out with laughter!

Beneath a roof, where dandelion stars
The rafters gilded,
Secured by no distrustful bolts or bars,
Some birds had builded.

I peeped within, despite a sentry bold
Of doughty metal,
Whose stinging impudence I knew of
old —
His name was Nettle !

It was not his rude protest made me spare
My sparrow tenants ;
I vanquished him, but left still fluttering
there
The flower pennants.

And oh ! I grieve that I who hate to
roam
From my own burrow,
Have turned blind little moles out of their
home
Beneath my furrow !

WAITING.

HEN the crickets chirp in the
evening
And the stars flash out in the
sky,

Lonely I sit in my doorway
And watch the children go by;
I look at their fresh young faces,
And hark to each merry word,
For to me a child's own language
Is the sweetest ever heard.

I sit in my lonely doorway
In the hour that I love the best,
And think, as I see them passing,
My child will come with the rest;
Think, as I hear the clicking
Of the little garden gate,
My darling's hand is upon it—
Oh, why has she come so late?

But the days have been slowly weaving
Their warp of toil in my life;
The weeks have brought me their burden
Of waiting and patience and strife;
The flowers that came with the sunshine
Have finished their errand so sweet,
And Autumn is dropping her harvests
Mellow and ripe at my feet.

And yet my little girl comes not,
So I think she has missed her way,
And strayed from this cold, dark country
To one of perpetual day.
Perhaps. But I long to enfold her,
To tangle my hand in her hair,
To feast my starved mouth on her kisses,
To hear her light foot on the stair.

Some day I am sure I shall find her,
But the road is lonesome between,
My spirit grows sick and impatient
For glimpses of pastures so green;

Waiting I sit in the doorway,
In the hour my heart loves best,
And think, when the children pass home-
ward,
My child will come with the rest.

IN VANITY FAIR.

RANDMOTHER sits in the corner there
Watching the comers to Vanity
Fair,

For Madame, her daughter, “receives”
to-day,
And a throng of carriages bars the way;
While color and perfume, and rare waltz-
note
In my lady’s corridors blend and float.

Yes, grandmother calls it “Vanity Fair,”
As she views the scene from her cushioned
chair;
With a curious shadow of grave surprise
Troubling the depths of her fine old eyes
At the shimmering robes, the laces fine,
And the splendid jewels that flash and
shine.

As she watches her daughter *débonnaire*,
Greeting the guests to Vanity Fair,
Does she not look like a picture old,
With her stiff brocade, and her kerchief's
fold?

Or a somewhat prim, old-fashioned flower
In the hot-house air of my lady's bower?

Standing under the candles' flare,
In the tinted light of Vanity Fair,
Is her granddaughter, with eyes so blue
That a pair of stars mistook their hue
For the larger heavens and softly hid
Behind the cloud of each snowy lid!

And grandmother sighs with a troubled air
"They will spoil you, dear, in Vanity
Fair;
They will brush the dew from your youth,
I know,
And I trust not fully the handsome beau
Who bent to your hand with so fine a bow
And gave you the crimson rose but now?"

And she mutters, "Poor little fly, take care
Of the webs they weave in Vanity Fair!"
And no philosopher in the land
Could make this grandmother understand
That Vanity Fair, with its tricks and ways,
Was much the same in her younger days.

Grandmother, brooding on days that were,
You are out of place in Vanity Fair!
As a sweet old psalm is out of chime
With a prancing tune, or a laughing
rhyme;
You are out of place in this modern room
With its garish light, and its rich perfume.

Let us wheel you out of the aching glare
From the lights and sounds of Vanity
Fair;
Up the stairs to the restful gloom
Of your own old-fashioned, quiet room,
Where the same clock ticks the hours
away
That wakened you on your wedding-day.

Let us leave all schemes that vex and
snare
To the belles and beaux of Vanity Fair.
You have had your day; now your night
is near,
Let us come away to your chamber here,
Where peaceful slumber your eyes invite,
Turn the light low; sleep well; good-
night!

IF.

F, sitting with this little worn-out
shoe
And scarlet stocking lying on
my knee,
I knew the careless feet had pattered
through
The pearl-set gates that lie 'twixt
Heaven and me,
And I could see beyond the mists of blue
God's tender hand, I could submissive
be.

If, in the morning, when the song of birds
Reminds me of a music far more sweet,
I listen for his pretty broken words
And for the music of his dimpled feet,
I could be almost happy, though I heard
No answer, and but saw his vacant seat.

I could be glad, if, when the day is done,
And all its cares and heartaches laid
away,
I could look westward to the hidden sun,
And, with a heart full of sweet yearn-
ings, say,
“To-night I’m nearer to my little one
By just the travel of a single day.”

If I could know those little feet were shod
In sandals wrought of light in better
lands,
And that the foot-prints of a tender God
Ran side by side with his in golden
sands,
I could bow cheerfully and kiss the rod,
Knowing he was in wiser, safer hands.

If he had died, as little children do,
I would not stain the wee sock on my
knee
With bitter tears, nor kiss the empty shoe

And cry, "Bring back my little boy
to me!"

I could be patient, until patience grew
Into the gladness of Eternity.

But oh, to know the feet once pure and
white,

The haunts of vice have boldly ven-
tured in!

The hands that should have battled for
the right

Have been wrung crimson in the clasp
of sin!

And should he knock at Heaven's gate
to-night,

My boy, alas, could scarce an entrance
win!

BUDGE, TOM, AND HONEST JOE.

ITHIN it wanted just an hour of
four;
Without, the world in summer
beauty lay,
And wistfully beyond the school-room
door
Budge, Tom, and Joseph looked this
hot June day.

They knew that in the fields the clover
spread
A rosy carpet, velvety and sweet;
They knew the path that to the old bridge
led,
Where children loved to sit and swing
their feet.

They knew that cherries hung upon the trees,
That trusting fishes swarmed the singing brook;
The robins seemed to call them from the leaves,
"Come out! Come out! and leave that hateful book!"

Budge dropped his drowsy head upon his breast,
Tom watched a fly upon the window-pane,
While Joseph, less lethargic than the rest,
Made horrid faces at his sister Jane.

The teacher saw the action with a smile,
Their flushed young faces made her pitiful;
"Which will you do, go out and play awhile,
Or stay with me," she said, "till close of school?"

Budge raised his sleepy head with glad surprise,

(Just then a robin past the doorway flew !)

He choked, grew rosy red, then dropped his eyes ;

“I guess — I’d rather — stay in here — with you.”

“And you, my Tommy?” Should not Tommy dare

To follow whither Spartan Budge had led?

(The robin called, the sky was oh, so fair !)

“I’ll stay with — Budge, I guess,” he gasping said.

But Joseph, with a look half bold, half shy,

His brown toes twisting in an awkward way,

Said, with a slight contempt in tone and eye,

“There ain’t no use to talk, *I’d* rather play.”

The teacher smiled; “I fear, my little Joe,
You only have been honest of the three.
I take each at his word; so you may go,
While Budge and Tommy will remain
with me.”

Poor little boys! for such a sacrifice
This was a fee they could not understand;

But when they said good night she kissed
them thrice,
And patted each round head with
gentle hand.

And were they wholly wrong, and Joe all
right?

I leave the answer for your tongues to
fill.

Talk it all over by the fire to-night,
And gather from the story what you
will.

But often do the world's sweet flatteries
Remind me of a day long years ago,
Around which cluster funny memories
Of three small boys, Budge, Tom, and
honest Joe.

IN MEMORY OF MR. CROWLEY OF CENTRAL PARK.

 O citizen of inferior name
 Has yielded up life's languid
 spark,
 But a chimpanzee of goodly fame,—
 Mr. Crowley of Central Park,
 Who from interior Africa came.

Many a slave of the pen we see,
 Who scribbles away from dawn till dark,
 Nor earns the fame of this chimpanzee,
 Who could neither write nor make his
 mark,
 Paradoxical though it be.

Many a player his lines may croon,
 Nor happily win, when his form lies
 stark,

An editorial in the *Tribune*

Like Mr. Crowley of Central Park,
Late trapeze player! Poor dead buffoon!

And many a poacher upon life's joys,
Bagging his spoils with a snarl and bark,
To meaner purpose his life employs
Than Mr. Crowley of Central Park; —
Jester at court of the girls and boys.

For a chimpanzee that can cheat dull care,
And break a tooth of that hungry shark;
Who lightens the pack that the poor must
bear

Like Mr. Crowley of Central Park,
Is a better thing than the poacher there.

No more, poor clown, will your pranks
beguile
Life's weary labor and ceaseless cark;
You will be set up in a life-like style,
And hold *levees* in a crystal ark,
With a very fixed and *blasé* smile.

Then, *au revoir*, with a kind regret !
Death interfered in your jolly lark,
And many a child's dear eyes are wet
For Mr. Crowley of Central Park, —
The dearest monkey they ever met !

LININGS.

 AY, nay, dear child, I cannot let
you slight
Those inner stitches on your
gown's fair hem
Because, you say, they will be out of sight,
And no stern critic will discover them.

You do but build a most inviting hedge,
Behind which falsehood and deceit may
lurk,
When you embroider fair the outer edge,
And to the inner give no honest work.

The silken chain of habit which you wear
So lightly now upon your careless youth
Will strengthen strand by strand; then
have a care!
Else it may throttle the sweet soul of
truth.

I hold that every stitch untruly set
Weaves a soiled thread along your web
of fate;
And each deceitful seam may prove a
net
To hurt and hinder, trust me, soon or
late.

Ah, dearest child, on everything you do
Let the white seal of honor stamp its
grace.
Keep all your soul as clean with heaven's
dew
As the pink flower of your tender
face.

God makes no clumsy linings. Mark this
bloom!
A "fairy's glove;" and though it grieves
my heart
To send the smallest blossom to its
tomb,
We 'll tear this dainty little glove apart.

In this and every flower that we behold,
From crimson rose to pansy's purple
vest,
God sews the velvet on the inner fold,
And makes His linings fairer than the
rest.

Is it not perfect, from the slender stem
To the brown dapples on the curling
rim?
God folds not carelessly the foxglove's
hem;
Then try, my little child, to be like
Him.

A PRAYER.

 H, long strong breaths of salt sea
air,

Oh, north winds rough and
south winds fair,

Toss all your rosy gifts about,
And blow afar our weary doubt !

Milk-white foam roses, break for me
From the green gardens of the sea,
And bring thy fragrance, briny sweet,
To wrap our love from brow to feet !

Bring rosy color to her mouth ;
And from the warm and humid South
Waft spices to the fevered breath,
And antidote the spell of death !

And from thy green o'erflowing cup
My hand shall dip a potion up,
And in thy wine, to thee I'll quaff
With relish sweet and joyous laugh.

Then bring to her the jewel health.
For naught of all thy treasured wealth
Is half so precious as this pearl —
This drooping lily of a girl !

A LITTLE CYNIC.

ANDELION and clover-top,
 Growing close together,
Bobbed their bright young heads
 and talked
In the sweet spring weather.

Just across the little path
 In a grassy hollow,
Buttercup was coquetting
 With a noisy swallow.

“ Do you know,” said Dandelion,
 Growing stiff and sullen,
“ That this minx, who used to rank
 With milk-weed and mullein,

“ Goes to parties, *matinées*,
 And all such queer places,
And is quite the rage they say,
 With her airs and graces?”

“ Well,” laughed Clover, merrily,

“ This will we agree on,

That she wears her honors well

For such a plebeian !

“ I should quite disgrace myself—

Spill my dew at dinner,

When it comes to etiquette

I 'm a dreadful sinner.”

“ There is Madam Hollyhock,”

Still pursued the other,

“ Used to be on friendly terms

With my great grandmother.

“ Then she wore a narrow skirt

With a simple tunic ;

Now she looks like some grand dame

Just arrived from Munich !

“ Then she leant upon the wall

Or the lattice, may be,

Now she rings the front door bell

Just like any lady ! ”

“ Why, you must be jealous, dear ! ”

Clover said serenely ;

“ For her colors are superb,

And her manners queenly.

“ Her quaint bodice of pale green

Fits her to perfection,

And a ruffle more or less

Is no great objection.”

Just then Violet passed by

In her soft, blue bonnet ;

Dandelion’s face grew dark

With the frown upon it.

“ See ! ” she cried, “ the whole, glad world

Greets her as she passes,

While our lives are hidden here

In the weeds and grasses !

“ How I hate her artless ways !

Hate her queer poke bonnet !

Hate her modest drooping face,

With the soft smile on it !

“‘ Modest Violet,’ indeed,
When her very glory
Is the meek humility
Granted her in story !

“ Tell me, does God love her best?
Count her blue gown fairer?
Are her graces sweet to Him?
Is her perfume rarer ? ”

“ Hush ! ” said Clover, sweetly grave,
“ God is God forever ;
Doubt whatever else you will,
But His goodness never !

“ Violet gives lavishly
Of her wealth of sweetness ;
And the world requites the debt
From its own completeness.

“ Do not wrong the God above
And our brown earth-mother.
Why not like your own life best,
Sighing for no other ? ”

“ I would never change my lot
With my wild bee lover
For a world of violets;
No, not I ! ” trilled Clover.

“ Humph ! ” that little cynic said
With her bright eyes closing;
And the rest I never heard,
For she fell a-dozing.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

 OD bless the little stockings
All over the land to-night,
Hung in the choicest corners
In a glow of crimson light!
The tiny scarlet stocking,
With a hole in heel and toe,
Worn by wonderful journeys
The darlings have had to go.

And Heaven pity the children,
Wherever their home may be,
Who wake at the first gray dawning
An empty stocking to see,
Left in the faith of childhood
Hanging against the wall,
Just where the dazzling glory
Of Santa's light will fall!

Alas, for the lonely mother
Whose home is empty and still,
Who has no scarlet stockings
With childish toys to fill !
But sits in the deepening twilight,
With her face against the pane,
And grieves for the little baby
Whose grave lies out in the rain !

O empty shoes and stockings,
Forever laid aside !
The tangled, broken shoe-strings
That will never more be tied !
O little graves, at the mercy
Of the cold December rain !
The feet in their snow-white sandals,
That never can trip again !

But happier they who slumber
With marble at foot and head,
Than the child who has no shelter,
No raiment, nor food, nor bed.

Yes ! Heaven help the living !
Children of want and pain,
Knowing no fold nor pasture —
Outside to-night in the rain !

JAMIE'S PRAYER.

 DAY'S weary burdens are laid by;
The world's great throbbing
heart is still;

The stars flash out, the moon's fair face
Rests on the peak of yonder hill.

I hear the katydids contend
The rustling maple leaves among;
And leaning toward the apple boughs,
I hear the robin brood her young.

It is the hour when children's prayers
Like perfume from the lilies rise,
When all the angels cry, "Oh, list!"
And God makes silence in the skies.

Two small brown hands, unsoiled by sin,
Are folded softly on my knee,
And over them my child's dear head
Is bowed in sweet humility.

Hark to the little honest prayer !
“ Dear God, I am too tired to pray,
And 't ain't as if you did n't know
Just all I 've said and done to-day.

“ I know it takes a sight of love
To make a boy's sins white, but then
You don't go back on what you say,
And I am not afraid — Amen.”

SHOCKING!

 HE smallest wheel in the rector's
clock,

The busiest worker in that queer
mill,

Grew tired of hearing the same tick-tock,
So a Sunday morning it stood stock-
still!

And what befell? Why, the rector good
Arrived at his church full a half hour
late,

With a flying gown — as no parson
should —

While all the parish amazed did wait.

With childish wonder our little Sue,
Who never had been in a church before
Saw, from her high-backed, oaken pew,
The rector enter the chancel door.

The wonder grew in the child's brown eyes,

What she was thinking we could not tell,
But a look of shame and of shocked surprise

Over her face like a shadow fell.

"What did you see at the church, my sweet?"

Said grandmother, kissing the lifted chin,
When at dinner the two did meet.

"Oh, grandma! the preacher came flying in,

So late that he didn't get on his clothes,

And had just a great, long nightgown on;
He had to hurry so, I suppose!"

Said the innocent child, while her round eyes shone.

"I guess he was drefful ashamed of hisself;

Would n't *you* be, grandma, in his place?

For he knelt right down on a little shelf,

And held his two hands over his face!

And, grandma, it was a minute before
He would lift his head and read from
his book.

He 'll not wear his nightgown, I guess
any more.

Oh, dear!" and she sighed, " how queer
it did look!"

THE SCARECROW.*



HOREAU surveyed the effigy
with scorn.

“Well! well!” laughed he, “some
urchin must have planned
This man of straw. No crow in all the
land

Was ever frightened from a feast of corn
By such a sentinel. No blackbird born
Would hesitate to perch upon its hand.
Crows are too knowing not to under-
stand

That this poor, stuffed-out thing, battered
and worn,

With dangling arms and shapeless,
jointless pegs,

Was never made by God.” Thoreau
paused here

* A true anecdote of Thoreau.

In his wise dissertation upon crows;
For lo! the scarecrow moved its "joint-
less" legs
And walked away to a gray farmhouse
near.
That *was* a funny blunder of Thoreau's!

IF WE KNEW.



F we knew the baby fingers
 Pressed against the window-
 pane

Would be cold and stiff to-morrow —
 Never trouble us again ; .

Would the bright eyes of our darling
 Catch the frown upon our brow?

Would the prints of rosy fingers
 Vex us then as they do now?

Ah, these little ice-cold fingers,
 How they point our memories back
To the hasty words and actions
 Strewn along our backward track !
How these little hands remind us,
 As in snowy grace they lie,
Not to scatter thorns — but roses —
 For our reaping by and by !

Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown ;
Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone ;
Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one-half so fair
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake their white down in the air !

Lips from which the seal of silence
None but God can roll away,
Never blossomed in such beauty
As adorns the mouth to-day ;
And sweet words that freight our memory
With their beautiful perfume,
Come to us in sweeter accents
Through the portals of the tomb.

Let us gather up the sunbeams
Lying all around our path ;
Let us keep the wheat and roses,
Casting out the thorns and chaff ;

Let us find our sweetest comfort
In the blessings of to-day;
With a patient hand removing
All the briars from our way.

A LITTLE ROBBER.



LITTLE robber whom I know
Came to my house nine years
ago,

And, with the most provoking ease,
Found out my casket and my keys,
And of the treasures I possessed
Purloined the dearest and the best.
The way this robber came to me
Is wrapped in sweetest mystery;
But the bewitching little thief,
Without remorse or touch of grief,
First stole, in many a pretty way,
Three times eight jewels every day;
Then, with his soft and rosy hands,
He pulled down all my strong commands,
The cherished plan, the ripened thought,
By years of rich experience bought.
My favorite opinions, too,
He into wildest chaos threw.

Some prim old maxims, quaintly wrought
With silver thread and pious thought,
By long consent had grown to be
Proud souvenirs of ancestry ;
These, by mere love of mischief led,
He picked to pieces thread by thread,
Until I feared my grandma's ghost
Would chain me to a whipping-post !
When I reproached, his wondrous eyes
Took on such look of grieved surprise,
I could but say, " Take what you will,
Your plunderings continue still ;
Purloin my time, my heart, my pelf,
Take everything except — yourself !
For what would all earth's treasures be
Without your blessed company ? "

And so, throughout the years and days,
Content this young marauder stays,
To be my comfort and my joy,
His name? Why, he 's my little boy !

“SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO
COME UNTO ME.”

 T was long years ago that He
uttered
This message, so tender and
sweet,
As women were crowding about Him
And laying their babes at His feet;
He looked, with a gentle compassion,
On the mothers in old Galilee,
While He comforted them with this saying,
“Let the little ones come unto me.”

From over the hills of Judea,
Down through the long line of the years,
That Voice of ineffable sweetness
Still comforts the mother's sad tears.
O Heart that has bled for our sorrows!
O Voice that can quiet the sea!
Come often to *me* with Thy whisper:
“Let the little ones come unto me!”

O mothers, whose children are lying
Out under the snow and the rain,
Let the beautiful words of the Master,
Give ease to your sorrow and pain !
He holds their bright heads on His bosom,
He gathers them close to His knee ;
And tenderly still He is saying,
" Let the little ones come unto me ! "

“A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD
THEM.”

HE land is wondrous fair,” the angel said.

“ Its sapphire skies are wrought with tints of gold ;
Its jewelled gates admit nor heat nor cold ;
And all along the way that you shall tread
A perfume marvellously sweet is shed
From lilies that eternally unfold.”

The lovely woman raised her timid face,
And to the messenger of death she spoke :
“ I know that human sight can not invoke

A vision of such fair, surpassing grace,
As those fair mansions in the heavenly
place,

But life and I have never friendship
broke.

"Therefore I fain would stay," she pleaded
low.

The angel's face wore nothing of
command;

He smiling said, "Behold, unarmed I
stand!

I left behind my arrows and my bow.
I shall not force you, lovely one, to go;
I only wait till you shall clasp my
hand.

"But even now your eyes are wet with
tears:

Come where a holy hand will wipe them
dry!

Oh, be my bride, my own beloved!
and I

Will kiss away your doubtings and your
fears,
And lead you gently through the eternal
years,
And prove a love that will not change
or die!"

The woman shrank from his caressing hand.

"But life hath loyal love as well," she
cried;
"A trusting heart would break of me
denied;
A faithful foot would track me to your
land.

And at the gates of pearl would waiting
stand.

"This life is fair and sweet to me," she
sighed.

"The swaying reed hath not a frailer grace
Than human love. It will not mourn
you long;
In Heaven your voice is needed in the
song.

Through countless ages God has kept your place.

Then, in my bosom hide your weeping face,

And let me bear you to the waiting throng."

" Nay, nay, sweet angel! Spare me this alarm;

For I am timid of the lonesome way.

A voice I love is begging me to stay!

A precious hand is clinging to my arm,—
A hand that never brought me pain or harm!

Oh, leave me now, and come another day!"

The angel drew her close and whispered sweet,

" Dear Heart! the streets are fair with children there,

God's sunlight hides its kisses in their hair,

And everywhere in Heaven a child you
meet."

The woman clasped his hand, and toward
the street

So bright with children, smiling went
the pair.

OUR BOBBY WAS PINCHING THE KITTEN.

UR Bobby was pinching the kitten,
And kicking his primer about,
And pulling a beetle to pieces,
His face all awry in a pout;
His mother, who, patient and loving,
Could coax her dear Bobby no more,
Now reached for the whip on the mantel—
And looked at her boy on the floor.

But grandma, with soft, muslin kerchief
Pinned over her warm, loving breast,
Where ten little heads had been pillow'd
And rocked into childhood's sweet rest,
Looked up from the little wool stocking
Just finished and laid on her knee,
And said, "Dear, you 'll ruin his temper,
You had far better let the child be."

“Don’t whip him — his father before him
Was punished and shut in the dark,
And stood on one foot in the corner,
And disciplined up to the mark;
We gave him no credit for honor,
But watched him as spiders watch flies.
I wonder that it did n’t teach him
To practise deceit and tell lies.

“We called it affection and duty —
God knows we were fond of the boy —
But I guess his remembrance of child-
hood
Is not quite a well-spring of joy.
So put up that willow whip, daughter,
And try little Bobby once more.
You see he’s forgotten his passion,
And lies half asleep on the floor.”

Then grandmother lifted her darling,
And patted his head on her breast,
And sang in a tremulous treble,
Till all Bobby’s woes were at rest.*

And so the wee whip, bright and yellow,
Was laid on the mantel again—
And that is the way that the grandmas
Spoil nine little boys out of ten.

HE KNOWS BEST.

 F I could utter some new magic
word
To lull the pain in one poor
troubled soul ;
Or when Bethesda's shining pool is stirred
Could lift some cripple in and make
him whole ;

If I could set some bruised and tired feet
Where they could henceforth tread a
smoother way,
I would not ask a gift more fair and
sweet,
To bless me on this happy Christmas
day.

Ah, foolish heart, be still ! Nor any
more
Distrust the tenderness that is divine !

He knows wherever feet are bruised and
sore,
And gives them pity, gentler far than
thine.

Our keenest sorrow may be sent to bring
The dearest guest our life has ever
known,—
Sweet patience, who in gathering the sting
From other's lives forgets about her own.

And there are *old* sweet words of truth
and love,
As full of meaning as a mother's kiss,
Which fall like benedictions from above,
And never weary in a world like this.

Bethesda's pool is nearer than we think,
It springs wherever there are tired feet;
The gift you crave lies trembling on its
brink,
You still may make your Christmas day
complete!

And though it may be hard to understand
The way through which He leads your
life and mine,
May we not safely trust the gracious hand
That brings to us so good a Christmas
time?

COMFORT.

 If I could lay my hand upon the heart
That moulders underneath the church-yard snows,
And bid the sleeping pulses wake and start,
And to the faded lips restore the rose;

If I could lead the precious child you love
With shrinking footsteps to his earthly place;
If I could bring him from the fold above,
The tangled paths of life again to trace;

Say! would you bid him lay his glory by
That you might hold him to your troubled breast?
And would your yearning mother-heart deny
The good to him that you might thus be blest?

I know your answer! Tenderly enough
Has God's sweet mercy through His
smiting shone.

Young feet are tender, and the way is
rough;
Be glad that you can tread the thorns
alone!

It is not long. The way is short between,
And we are near the gates of pearl and
gold;

And yonder rise the hills of living green,
Where children never die, nor yet grow
old!

And when the storms shall beat, and rains
shall fall,

And when you faint beneath the sun's
fierce ray,

O friend be glad! and sing above it all,
"My child is safe from all these ills
to-day!"

A SUBPŒNA.



OISTEROUS Wind ! Prince
Weather's clown !
You have raised such a breeze
in Blossom-town,
That the undersigned bid you appear
And answer the charges mentioned here.

Robin is there quite red in the breast
With rage, at the loss of a brand-new nest.

Bumble-bee draggled from sting to chin
Crawls from the pool you tumbled him in.

Violet looks *so* wicked and sly
With her tattered bonnet blown all awry !

Hyacinth, blue, and with head cast down,
Has a breadth torn out of her bell-shaped
gown.

Butterfly holds up a crippled wing; —
(How *could* you spoil such a dainty thing?)

Some sweet young buds that were coming
out
Fetchingly gowned for their opening rout,

You whirled away to a dance of your own
With never a sign of a chaperone !

And worst of all, in your headlong race
You drew your switches across the face

Of that pet of the forest, Anemone,
Bravest and frailest of flowers that be.

Then haste, rude Jester ! Prince Weather's
clown !

By the air-line route to Blossom-town.
For, I give you warning, there 's much
ado

In the circles there, on account of you.

DEPARTING DAY.



WHILE children lean their cheeks in
drowsy prayer
Against their mother's knees, and
all the air
Is sweet with vesper bell;
See, the spent Day faints on the sunset
strand,
Her smouldering torch down-drooping
from her hand
In token of farewell!

With vague regret I watch each ebbing
grace:
Come Twilight, gentle nun! before her
face
Shall cold and ashen be;

Fold thy gray veil above her as she lies,
And sprinkle her with dews from thy soft
eyes ;
She hath been kind to me.

THE END.

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